IN ORDER

To Amaze

A COLLECTION OF MEMORIZED-DECK MAGIC

PIT HARTLING

mnemonica

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Many greetings,

Pit Hartling

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Layout: Nicolai Tilov, tilov.com
Photos: Jonas Ratermann, jonasratermann.de,
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Contents

Acknowledgements 7
Foreword by Simon Aronson 9
Introduction 14

MISCELLANEOUS STACK MIRACLES

Catch Me If You Can 16
The Heavyweight 26
Sherlock 40
Close Encounters 48
The Core 60
Thought Exchange 70
Duplicity 80
Echoes 92
The Poker Formulas 102
Just Like That 112

QUARTETS 116

Top of the Heaps 122
Murphy's Law 132
The Chosen 140
Identity 150
The Illusionist 160
Four-Way Stop 168
The Right Kind of Wrong 178

THE STACK-DEPENDENTS 186

Fairy Tale Poker 190
Quick Change 200
Poker Night at the Improv 210
Game of Chance 232

Last Word 247
Bibliography 248

Acknow-ledgements

As a magician my job is to do the impossible, but producing a book entirely on my own is a trick I have yet to master. Fortunately, there were several true wizards who have helped with this in one way or another. To all of them I give my warmest thanks:

First and foremost is my good friend **Denis Behr**. Not only has Denis proven to be a reliable source of ~~malice~~ constructive criticism, contributing many comments, ideas and improvements to the routines and their descriptions; he also allowed me to include his handling for replacing four cards back to their original stack positions (the "Plop Replacement"), for which I am very grateful. Denis also provided many of the credits for this book. Once again his expertise has proven invaluable, and I am sure he will be all smug about it for years to come.

Special thanks go to **Simon Aronson** for his fine foreword. I have admired Simon ever since first reading his books. The feeling deepened when later meeting in person at conventions and in Simon's and Ginny's home in Chicago. To have him be part of this volume is an honour and an absolute delight. Thank you, Simon, for your kind words – I will do my best to live up to them.

Many thanks also go to **Richard Hatch** who gave numerous important hints on style and grammar. He deserves a trophy for spotting dozens of missing letters, surplus spaces and wrongly formatted footnotes, as well as many a "Germanism" that had crept into my writing. Tausend Dank, Dick!

Another one who kindly agreed to help was **Doug McKenzie**. As well as proofreading, Doug took the time to actually follow the descriptions with cards in hand to help remove ambiguities and ensure everything is clear and easy to follow. Without him, many paragraphs would have left you scratching your head. Thanks, Doug!

Tyler Wilson is one of the most generous and competent guys under the sun. He, too, had a close look at the text, and then another one after the final layout to help weed out most of the errors that had crept in again. (I actually kept a few, just because I couldn't get enough of Tyler's hilarious comments. I also placed the full stop at the end of this sentence outside the brackets just for him).

The number-cards used in the photographs for "Sherlock" and "Duplicity" were custom-made for this very purpose by "Card-shark" **Christian Schenk**, and I thank him for it.

They say "don't judge a book by its cover". Feel free, however, to judge the cover. Just like the layout and the design of the whole book it is the work of graphic artist extraordinaire **Nicolai Tilov**. I find it comforting that, may people say what they want about the book's contents, thanks to Nicolai its form will always remain a thing of beauty.

Jonas Ratermann is a master behind the lens, and his photographs play a central role in this book. While illustrations have their own advantages and may be even better suited for conveying pure technical information, I feel in addition to their aesthetic appeal, nothing transports the feel of a magic gesture, the attitude for a joke or the touch of a sleight better than good photographs. If we succeeded in this at all, it is entirely thanks to Jonas.

Last but not least, this book would not exist in its present form without **Juan Tamariz**. I refer to Juan's work in several places in this volume, but make no mistake: His influence is really present on every page. The first time I saw Juan perform, at a convention in Germany in 1992, it was a pivotal moment in my (magical) life, and while I have had a number of important and cherished influences, no one has shaped my personal understanding of magic more than him.

Foreword

Simon Aronson

GOOD THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES...

Pit Hartling's first book, *Card Fictions*, was small in size, and its trick "quantity" was modest: only seven items. But even a quick read was enough to convince card magicians worldwide that this little volume was a BIG contribution to card magic. It introduced incredibly original plots, devious methods, and engaging presentations, all tied together with perceptive theoretical insights into our art. Clearly Pit was "no small potato."

In Order to Amaze takes a further step toward establishing Pit as a major creative force in card magic. But don't let the subtitle, "A Collection of Memorized-Deck Magic," fool you: this latest book is of tremendous value to *anyone* who's interested in clever, artful card magic – regardless of whether or not you ever use a memorized deck. Its breadth far exceeds the particular topic at hand.

There's no need to tout the utility, deceptiveness, or popularity of memorized deck magic. Pit is clearly one of its leading practitioners, and in this book you'll see why. Pit is releasing effects which have been in his working repertoire for years, tricks which have been tested in the real world, perfected in practice, and polished to make them entertaining as well as magical.

A few general points will pique the interest of all memorized-deck aficionados:

- First, the vast majority of the included effects are completely stack-independent.
- Second, while Pit himself uses Juan's Mnemonica stack, he writes for all of us. I was surprised, when I first received an early draft of this manuscript, to see that Pit had gone out of his way to provide specific examples and alternatives for both Juan's and the "Aronson" stack (without my ever having asked… And I'm confident that Pit inwardly apologized profusely to Nikola). Indeed, for the *Quartets* section, where the layout of the various four-of-a-kinds is necessarily stack specific, Pit has painstakingly researched to find and describe the peculiarities, idiosyncrasies, and workability for each of these two popular stacks.
- Third, Pit is a working magician, so things like "resetting" or maintaining a stack's order once the trick is finished are important. Practically every entry in the book includes a section on "Returning Home," which provides efficient, often automatic, ways of restoring your stack.

As an entertainer, Pit is crucially aware that variety is what holds an audience's interest, so Pit's plots run the gamut: they include discoveries (by both the performer and the spectator), mind reading, matching routines, predictions, and even a visual change (twice) of a four-of-a-kind (yes, made possible by a memorized deck!).

For instance, if impossible locations are your penchant, you'll love Pit's "Sherlock." Imagine: while the cards are out of the performer's hands, a card is freely selected and freely replaced, and the deck shuffled by the spectator. Not only can you find the card, but Pit's presentation (recalling the skills of Sherlock Holmes) has an instantly recognizable and engaging hook. And as a bonus, the spectator-shuffled deck is secretly restored to stack order.

"Just Like That" offers a double climax: the performer and the spectator each freely think of a card, and then each freely removes and pockets a card from the deck. Surprisingly, each has found the others' thought-of card. It's a simple, exceedingly practical trick that can easily become your go-to workhorse effect, usable under virtually any conditions. In "Thought Exchange," Pit takes this plot further, combining disparate methods to recreate an incredibly direct and efficient version of Al Koran's classic "Double Thought" (but without any need for a marked deck). Indeed, the amount of information and power that Pit squeezes out of just half a memorized stack is impressive.

Two-deck effects can build a card trick into something that plays "big," and Pit offers several off-beat examples. One of my favorites is "Catch Me If You Can" (and its several variations). I'm not sure which part I like better – the impossible plot (a sandwich captures a freely named card in a deck, even though you *never* touch the deck at any time during the trick) or its quirky methodological premise.

Perhaps Pit is at his most innovative in his explorations contained in the Quartets section. Many (very many) years ago I coined the phrase "stack number" as a shorthand way of referring to and thinking about a card's "secret identity," i.e., its original position in a memorized stack. Pit (along with his creative cohort Denis Behr) has coined a new phrase, a "distance number," to refer to the distance between any two specific cards in a stack. But it's not simply new terminology – learning distance numbers provides a new, practical tool for expediting your way around your stack. For a one-time investment of a bit more memorizing, you can create a multitude of new effects which would otherwise have been cumbersome and impractical to perform. Since producing four-of-a-kind is an almost automatic applause cue, the Quartets concept allows you to perform a multitude of such miracles. For example, in "The Chosen," after freely naming any value, the spectator himself touches any four cards in the spread – and finds his own named four-of-a-kind.

While mem-deck users are probably already salivating, I've mentioned that this book delves deeply into topics that are important to *all* cardicians. Pit has "chops," and some of his most powerful effects exemplify the combination of memorized deck subtleties with sleight of hand. Here, his technical descriptions contain insightful, practical tips on timing, pausing, and misdirection. Pit's detailed advice on something as simple as cutting a desired card to the top of the deck by estimation, or the timing of a psychological stop, are based on a wealth of experience.

But my absolute favorite aspect of "In Order to Amaze" is, in fact, neither the particular effects or their methods – it's Pit's skill and originality in devising engaging presentations. Pit is a whimsical, funny man (it was contagious, from Heinz). He recognizes that an underlying principle of magic is that we're presenting something that isn't real – and our audience knows and appreciates this! So, we can have fun, not take the situation too seriously, and let our imaginations run free. Pit's buzz words, his hooks and opening lines, create tongue-in-cheek scenarios for our audience to "play along" with. "Did you know that playing cards occasionally talk with each other?..." or, "We need someone who is always unlucky..." or Pit's pseudo-explanation, "I use two decks, and you can choose either. That way, if the trick fails, I can blame you for choosing the wrong deck;" or even the quizzical, "Sometimes, the best tricks are the ones that never really happened." Such themes and premises open possibilities for any audience to pretend, to relax, and to participate in the story.

But it's not just that Pit is a wild and crazy guy. Pit's plots, and his theorizing on all aspects of presentation and theatre, are grounded in his close association with Juan Tamariz, his extensive experience performing on stage and close-up, and his ability to grasp and explain the theatrical principles that make his magic successful. The book is replete with Pit's observations on concepts like how and when to switch into Performing Mode; or the use of gestures; or the importance of truth (or artistic truth); and many other insights. Even if you read this tome solely as a touchstone for lessons on presentation, you would be richly rewarded.

Finally, this book is an easy, fun read. Pit's style is both lucid and precise, and his opening summaries, both of effect and his method overview, are extremely helpful. Pit clearly enjoys not only performing, but talking with you, his readers. Any performer

who can refer to his own presentation with, "Confusion, amusement, pity and disgust are all perfectly acceptable reactions at this point" obviously deserves a chuckle.

Several years ago I was honored to write the Introduction to the English translation of Juan's *Mnemonica*. Memorized-deck magic now has another major entry on your library shelf, with Pit Hartling's *In Order to Amaze*.

Simon Aronson
Chicago, Illinois
June 27, 2015

Introduction

The memorized deck holds a special place in my repertoire. Ever since I first got in touch with it sometime in the mid-nineties, a performance of card magic for me usually involves two decks – one shuffled and one memorized. My first book *Card Fictions* covered some of my work with the shuffled deck. Now it is time to have a look at the other one.

While most of the material in this volume is published here for the first time, some of the routines are actually older than the ones in my previous book. It has been thirteen years since then, and I believe this is a good thing:

Magic is a performing art, and routines evolve over time. There may be the occasional stroke of luck, but usually it takes a while for an idea to mature into a full-grown piece. And while I am sure they will keep changing as they continue being performed, I believe I can honestly say all the routines in this book have at least reached intellectual adulthood (which is probably more than some would say about me).

Over the years a great number of little insights were gained into these twenty-one effects in particular and the performance of magic in general, and I tried my best to let much of that slip into the explanations. It is hoped that you will find at least some of it useful for your own work, whether you choose to perform the specific routines or not.

The vast majority of the effects in this book work with any memorized order. I myself happen to use the Tamariz stack, and if not otherwise mentioned, this order is used in the examples as well as in the photographs. Another stack that is often referred to is the Aronson stack (the other "big one"), but in any case the effects are described in a way that should make it easy to follow along with your own stack, whichever it may be.

This book is divided into three parts: The first section contains a variety of general effects and methods for the memorized deck. The second part introduces seven rather diverse pieces using the "Quartet" concept (it is recommended to read the introduction to this before lunging at the routines). Finally, the last chapter presents four routines that are stack-dependent: Two require the Tamariz stack, one works with either the Tamariz or the Aronson Stack, and the last one uses a structural set-up that is quickly reached from the Tamariz order, but can actually be done without any fixed stack at all.

Finally, a note on language: While fortunately half of most audiences are female, most of the descriptions use the male pronoun "he" when referring to a spectator. This is owed entirely to grammatical convention and brevity. To all female readers: Welcome – and my apologies.

And now it's time to get started: Physics tells us that lifting an object increases its potential energy. Similarly, I like to imagine that every time we arrange our cards in memorized order we are really charging the pack. On the following pages, then, a number of ways are suggested to turn this energy into amazement.

I invite you to charge your deck, turn the page and enjoy the ride!

Pit Hartling
Frankfurt, September 2015

Catch Me
If You Can

Catch Me If You Can

This two-deck, two-phase sandwich routine contrasts sleight of hand with hands-off test conditions. It also uses a somewhat offbeat method that makes me smile every time I do it.

EFFECT

The performer offers to break one of magic's golden rules and do the same trick twice – the first time with sleight of hand, the second time without.

First, in a shameless display of dexterity, two "detective" cards catch a freely named "criminal" in the middle of a shuffled deck.

Then the two detectives' colleagues in a second deck, isolated since the beginning and untouched by the performer throughout, impossibly catch the freely named card in their deck as well.

METHOD OVERVIEW

This effect is made possible by a simple idea: After a spectator freely names any card (the "criminal") the performer names as "detectives" the two cards that sandwich the spectator's card in the second (memorized) deck.

For the first phase a regular, shuffled deck is used and the criminal is loaded between the two detectives with a standard spread-cull procedure.

For the second phase, the work is already done: Whichever card the spectator freely named, the detectives were chosen such that they have already caught it.

PERFORMANCE

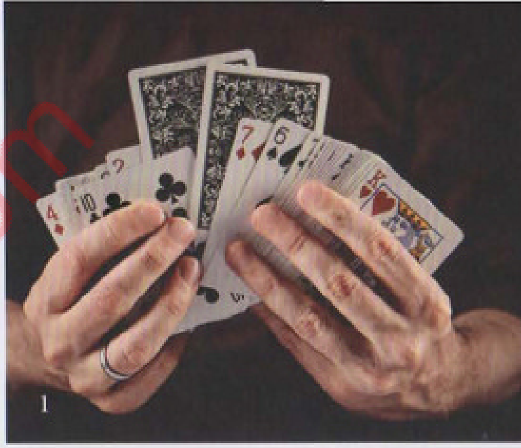
Two decks are used, one shuffled and one memorized. False shuffle the memorized deck while a spectator shuffles the other. Place the memorized deck into its case and officially put it aside for later.

Announce a nerve-racking crime story and say: *"We need a criminal!"* Immediately turn towards a spectator and ask: *"Can you help us?"* This can be quite amusing, so wait for any reaction before you clarify: *"To name a criminal, I mean. Which card do you want to be the criminal?"* Suppose he names the Ten of Clubs.

The moment the spectator names the card, immediately interrupt him and say, as if you had forgotten: *"Ah, but first we need the two detective-cards: The Six of Hearts and Five of Diamonds. These two can catch any criminal!"* Here, of course, you name the two cards that sandwich the spectator's card in your memorized deck. (You want to give the impression that you had momentarily gotten ahead of yourself. It should seem as if the detectives are usually taken out first.)

As you spread through the shuffled deck face up to remove the two detectives, secretly bring the named card to a known position near the back of the deck. I usually use a spread cull to position it fourth from the top.[1]

Hand the two detective-cards to a spectator. As you spread the deck face down between your hands and invite him to insert the detectives face up and together anywhere in the deck, use a cull to steal the fourth card from the top (the criminal) under the spread. When the spectator places his two cards in at any spot, leave them outjogged for about half their length and secretly feed the upper left corner of the culled card between them (Photo 1 exposed view). From above everything looks as it should - the two detectives are apparently still together in the deck (Photo 2). Let this image sink in and then slowly square everything. The named card has been loaded between the two face-up detectives.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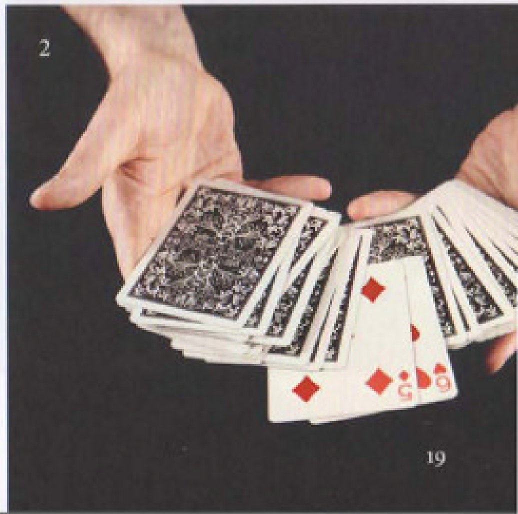
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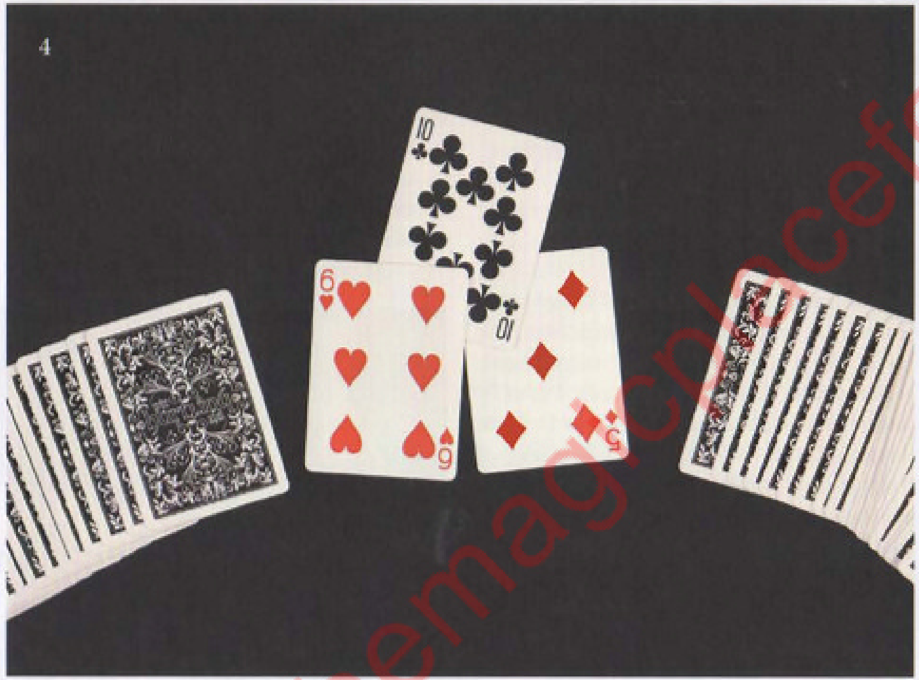
[1] For a description of the spread cull see *Card College Volume 1* (Giobbi, 1994) page 187.

3



4

Ask for the criminal again as if hearing it (or at least paying attention to it) for the first time, and announce that the two detectives will try to catch it using their special training. Pause a beat and then suddenly execute the wildest, most complicated-looking flourish you can muster (without changing the positions of the three cards in the middle of the deck (Photo 3)).[2] Immediately place the deck onto the table and say: *"Done!"* This sudden outburst of finger flimflam can be quite amusing.

After a suitable pause, slowly spread the deck face down on the table to show that the two detectives have caught one card between them. Turn it over to reveal the criminal (Photo 4).

Offer to perform the trick a second time as promised, but this time without sleight of hand.

Gesture towards the second deck in its case and explain: *"The detectives have their two colleagues in that other town over there – the other Six of Hearts and the other Five of Diamonds."* Execute some kind of magic gesture to indicate that the two detectives are informing their colleagues in the other deck which card to hunt down (I hold the two near the box, rub them together a bit and make unintelligible squeaky sounds, remarking that this is *"secret detective-language."* Photo 5.)

5

After a short pause, ask a spectator to remove the memorized deck from its case and hold it face down in his hand.[3] One by one, he is to turn the cards face up onto a pile until he comes to one of the detectives. As you know the order of the cards, you will find it easy to stop him when the first detective appears and before he turns over the next card. Ask him to place the first detective a bit apart in front of the deck. Tell him to place the next card face down on top of the detective, overlapping it halfway, and finally to turn the next card face up again (the second detective!) and place it on top of the other two, forming a sandwich.

Remind your spectators that this second deck has been in the case and untouched

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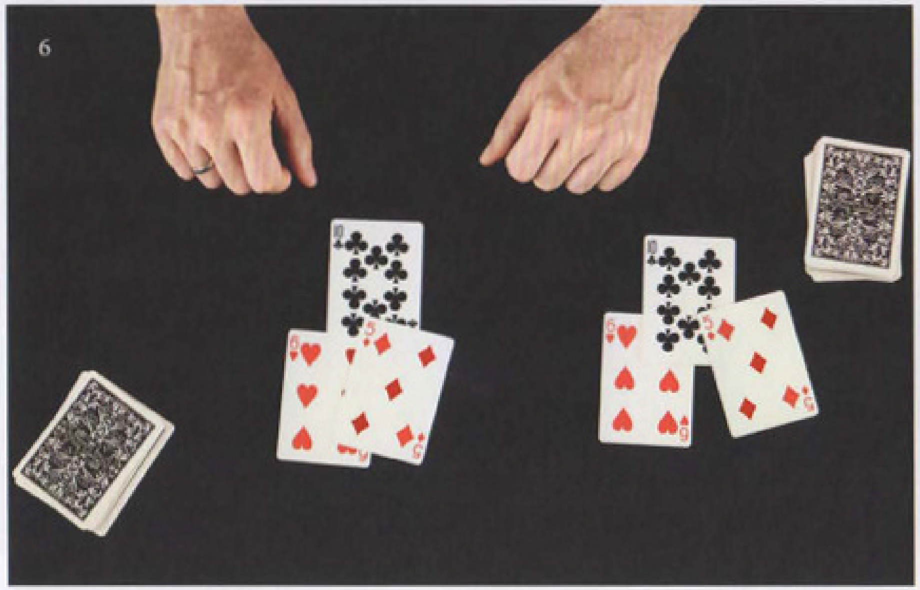
[2] I use a two-handed version of Helge Thun's "Flip-Flap Flourish" described in *The Book* (Fraps, Thun, Willich, 1998) page 104. To see the original performed and explained by the man himself, see the DVD *The Movie* (The Flicking Fingers, 2002).

[3] For the following you want the sandwich neither too close to the top (undramatic) nor too far down in the deck (tedious). Now is the time to have the spectator give the deck a cut, if necessary.



6

since the beginning and slowly reveal that, nevertheless, the detectives managed to catch exactly the named card (Photo 6).

COMMENTS

While the first effect is a solid and impressive little trick in itself, the real impossibility lies, of course, in the second phase: Two detectives catch a freely named card in an untouched deck. As always, however, there is a price to pay:

It may not have escaped your attention that instead of the traditional pair of mates, this effect uses two random and unrelated cards as detectives. Fortunately, experience has shown that spectators who are not familiar with the conventions of the sandwich plot don't mind this at all and readily accept any two cards for what they are: The famous Detective-Cards! (For more on this, see the alternative handlings below.)

The second phase boldly ignores yet another sandwich-standard: In the second deck the two detectives never really appear reversed. It was Denis Behr who suggested the staging at the end to create the classic "sandwich" image and effectively camouflage this limitation. (You may find that the moment when the third card of the sandwich is turned face up and seen to be the second detective, is actually a little effect in its own right.)

The False Frame of Reference

I consider it an endorsement for this trick that Denis Behr included it in his set in a monthly close-up show that played in a theatre in Munich for about two years. When I was in the audience one night, a couple was discussing the effect during the intermission and I overheard the lady say to her husband: *"But how did the card get there? The deck was out before he named it!"*

I believe this goes to show something important (apart from the fact that I am bigheaded enough to mention the incidence): It is a fine example of what Darwin Ortiz calls a "False Frame of Reference." As Darwin writes: *"If you can get people to ask the wrong questions, you'll guarantee that they never arrive at the right answer. Aim to generate a false interpretation of what has happened in the effect. Create a false frame of reference. This determines the mental set with which the spectator views the effect."*[4]

As "Catch Me If You Can" is based largely on this concept, I believe Ortiz' insightful analysis is particularly important for this trick: The two detectives should be named quite matter-of-factly without making a big deal out of it. Their identity goes completely unquestioned, the audience later wondering instead: *"How did they manage to catch the named card?"* If you can get your spectators to view the effect from this perspective, you will have performed a miracle.

Alternative handlings

My friend Miguel Puga (Mago Migue) tells me he had a similar idea. His version is to appear in his upcoming book under the title of "El Sandwich Vago." Meanwhile, here are a few more alternative handlings.

In the above description, the two detectives are simply named, implying that they are always the same two cards. Another approach is to use two seemingly random cards (which might raise even less suspicion about the fact that they are completely unrelated). Here are two handlings that achieve just that:

Culling and forcing the detectives

As in the original version, as soon as the spectator freely names a "criminal", start spreading through the face-up deck looking for the two appropriate detectives. This time, however, do not name them (commenting instead that *"Any card can be the criminal. Look, the deck is full of shady figures"*) and don't remove them from the deck. Instead, use a spread cull to bring the two to the back of the deck. From here you can either give the deck a casual false cut and take the top two (seemingly random) cards, or you can force them on a spectator. In either case, as the two detectives are shown and commented on, casually spread through the face-up deck again, bring the criminal to fourth position from the back and continue as described.[5]

If you don't feel comfortable spreading through the deck while just making casual comments (without officially having a good reason, that is), try this handling suggested by Simon Aronson: Cull the detectives as you openly remove the named card from the deck (in case you come to the named card before having culled both detectives, simply "overlook" it and come back later). Force the two detectives, and then have the spectator lose the criminal in the deck, controlling it to fourth from the top. Continue as described.

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[4] *Designing Miracles* (Ortiz, 2006) page 127.

[5] I initially control just the two detectives, and cull the criminal later, because I find it quite difficult to cull all three cards in one go without overlooking any of them. In case you do not encounter any such difficulty, by all means cull all three at once.

No culling needed: Two memorized decks

If you would rather not have to cull any cards at all, you may want to try the following: Start with both decks in memorized order.[6] After some false shuffles, have a spectator place either of the two decks into its case and put it aside for later. Have a card freely named and use an estimated cut (and correction, if needed)[7] to make it second from the top in your deck.

Now execute a very simple shuffling sequence: Run two cards and replace them on top, then three cards and replace them on top. This will position the two required detectives on top followed by the named criminal.

Force the two detectives and as they are shown casually shuffle or cut three cards on top of the criminal and continue as described.[8] Note that this version also strengthens the first phase: The named card is found without you apparently ever looking at the faces of the cards!

Security method: No memorization necessary

Finally I'd like to mention a variation that might appeal to some. This handling is not recommended as standard but it might prove useful if you are only beginning to work with a memorized deck and do not yet feel perfectly at ease with it in front of an audience:

Again begin with two decks in memorized order. As always, after some false shuffles one deck is placed into its case and to the side. The spectator freely names any card as the criminal.

If you remember the card's position in your stack and can easily cut it to second from the top, perfect. If, however, you draw a blank – don't worry. Simply spread through the deck with the faces towards yourself and locate the named card. "Realize" that first you need the two detective cards, casually cut the named card to the second position from the back (preferably using an injog and delayed cut or even a pass) and continue as described in the previous handling.

Note that this version does not in fact require you to know a stack at all: All that is needed are two decks in the same order. While admittedly not particularly elegant (after all, one of the main features of using a memorized deck is precisely not having to look at the faces of the cards), simply knowing that this "safety net" exists will go a long way to ease your mind and prepare you for further ventures into the world of memorized-deck magic.

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[6] While I generally do not like to use two memorized decks, I found this handling very suitable when performing "Catch Me If You Can" as an opener (to which, incidentally, in a formal setting it lends itself very well).

[7] For details see the comments to the "Close Encounters", page 56.

[8] You may also want to try this very efficient handling suggested by Denis Behr: Having cut the named card to second from the top, give the deck a shuffle as follows: In the first shuffling motion peel off the top two cards together. Follow with a single card. As you continue the shuffle, steal those three cards back under the deck in a lift shuffle action and shuffle normally for about half the deck. Finally place everything from the right hand onto the cards in the left, converting the gap from the lift shuffle into a regular left fourth-finger break. You are ready to force the detectives and continue as described.

The Heavyweight

The Heavyweight

This routine is like an old pal to me. It has served me well in countless performances at dinner tables, in formal close-up settings and parlour shows. "The Heavyweight" is a version of the classic "Weighing the Cards" that ultimately goes beyond a demonstration of skill.

EFFECT

The performer demonstrates his uncanny feel for cards: First, he identifies the exact number of cards in a cut-off packet. He goes on to cut off the exact same amount as a spectator without so much as touching the spectator's packet. Finally, he knows how many cards will be cut – even before the spectator cuts.

METHOD OVERVIEW

During the first part a few simple glimpses tell the performer all that he needs to know. For the last phase a card is secretly added to a small prediction packet to bring it to the correct number.

PERFORMANCE

PHASE I – Knowing a cut-off number

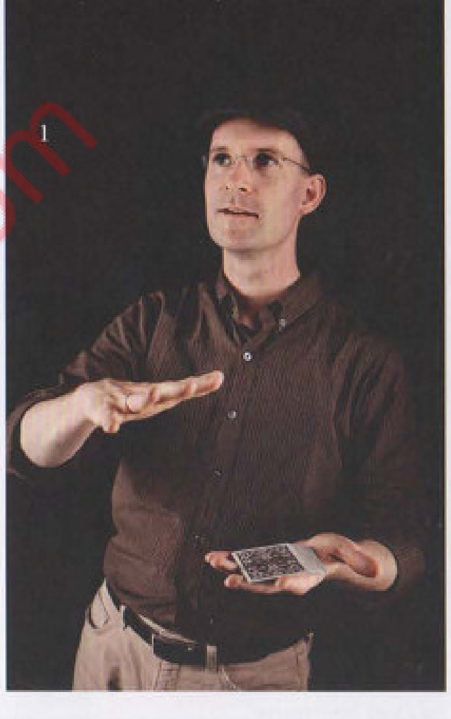
"I have been holding cards in my hands pretty much every day, for more than twenty-five years. Handling cards that much has two effects: First, you become a little strange. But also, you develop an uncanny feeling for the cards."

After this or a similar introduction, pick up the deck, give it a false shuffle keeping it in memorized order (with stack number 1 on top and 52 on the bottom) and offer a demonstration.

Place the deck in front of a spectator and ask him to cut off a bit more than half. Hold out your left hand and have him place his cut-off packet onto it as you say: *"There are fifty-two cards in the deck. The moment the packet touches my hand..."* Accompanying your words, briefly lift the packet with your right hand catching a glimpse of the bottom card in the process and with a little emphasis let it drop back onto your hand. During this, turn your gaze away as if carefully listening ("sensing") (Photo 1), and continue: *"...I know there are exactly ... thirty-six cards!"* Here, of course, you name the stack number of the glimpsed card.

Hand the packet to a spectator and ask him to count the cards to himself, casually telling him to *"simply push them over one under the other, like this."* Demonstrate by pushing the cards over one by one without reversing their order.[1]

As the spectator counts the cards to himself, address the rest of the group: *"If there is one card too many; thirty-seven – not so good. If there is one card too little; thirty-five – not so good. But if there are exactly thirty-six cards: A spontaneous round of applause!"* Apart from dramatizing the situation and ensuring a good reaction when the number is confirmed, this little speech also fills the time of the spectator's count. While counting can be great for building suspense (something that will be used later in the routine) that is not what is needed at this early stage (see the comments section below).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I always try to time the delivery of the above three sentences such that I am finished just when the spectator has only a small number of cards left. As he still counts those last few cards, I gently prompt him to continue *"out loud."* Ideally, everybody will just hear him finish: *"...thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-six!"* and burst into applause. This is a beautiful moment, and getting the timing just right is one of my personal little pleasures in this routine.

PHASE I ½ – cutting the right number

With the phenomenon thus established, a brief variation is shown, before going into the next part of the routine. Make sure the deck is back in position with stack number 1 on top and number 52 on the bottom and say: *"It also works in reverse.*

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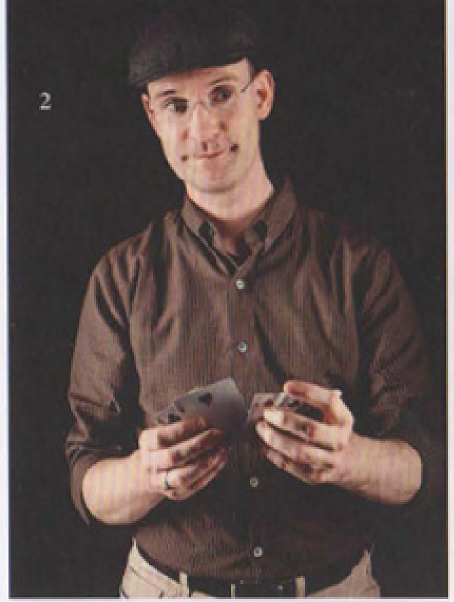
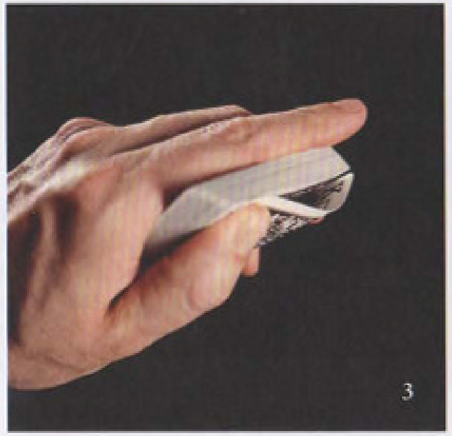
[1] Should he still reverse the packet, don't worry; you can always restore order later by running the cards singly in a quick shuffle. Usually, however, briefly showing him how to count will save you the trouble.





You see, just now you cut some cards and I told you how many."

As you say *"you cut some cards"*, match your actions to your words and cut off about a quarter of the deck tilting the packet just enough to catch a glimpse of the card on the face of the packet. Immediately replace the packet onto the deck, holding a break. Suppose you cut off thirteen cards.

Continue: *"But if someone names any number – I don't know, thirteen or something – and I cut, it will always be that number!"* As the "random example" name the number of cards above the break.

When you say *"I cut"*, do just that, cutting off the packet above the break. Have a spectator remind you: *"What number did I say?"*, and after he tells you thirteen, say: *"Then this is exactly thirteen cards."*

This direct claim, followed by a short pause, will invariably raise doubt and usually a request for proof. Should nobody actually say anything, simply get the message from their silence and quickly add: *"Oh, that was just an example!"* This seems like a cheap excuse and will get a laugh. React by giving them a playfully indignant look, place the balance of the deck on the table and count the cut-off packet out loud at chest height as if just checking for yourself (Photo 2) (but still slow enough so everybody can follow). It is indeed the right number and you repeat: *"But that was just an example!"* This gets another laugh and nicely cues the applause. Replace the packet onto the deck to keep everything in memorized order.[2]

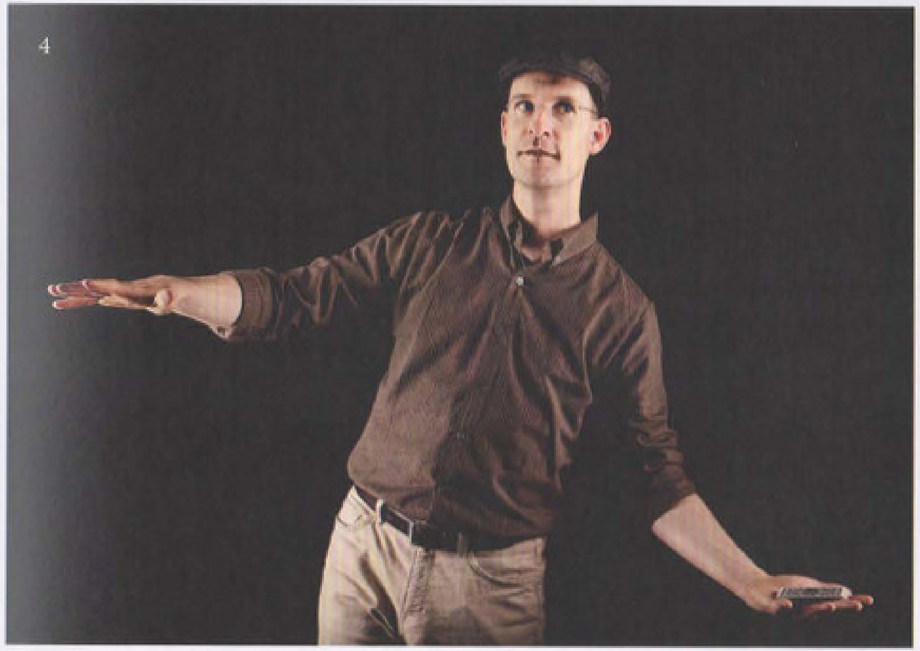
PHASE II – Duplicating a spectator's number

Give the deck another false shuffle as you say: *"First I thought maybe it's the weight. But that's not it. Here, let me show you."* Place the deck in front of a spectator on your right and ask him to cut off less than half (*"maybe about a third or so"*). Tell him to keep the packet to himself so you cannot touch it.

Cut off a packet yourself from the rest of the deck, making it slightly larger than the spectator's, and hold it in left-hand dealing position. Announce that you will try to establish perfect balance between your packet and the spectator's. As you say *"my packet"* briefly point to it and use a bubble glimpse to secretly learn the identity of the top card (Photo 3). This will tell you how many cards the spectator is holding: One less than the glimpsed card's stack number.

Let your packet rest flat on your outstretched left hand and extend your right hand over the spectator's packet supposedly "sensing" how many cards he has. Matter-of-factly say: *"Ah, ok. Seventeen"* (naming, of course, the correct number) *"Let's see."* Lower your left hand, indicating that your packet contains more cards than his (Photo 4).

Momentarily take your packet in right-hand end grip. Mentally double the number of cards in the spectator's packet. The



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[2] You may have noticed that the effect of this phase is in itself considerably weaker than the one before (after all you have cut the packet yourself). The key is to present this phase as unplanned (which is why I think of this as phase I ½): Apparently you just thoughtlessly cut off a packet, never intending an official demonstration. You count the cards only when pressed to do so. It is this conflict and the apparent lack of planning that garner reactions well out of proportion to the little effort involved. See also "Inducing Challenges", *Card Fictions* (Hartling, 2003), page 60.

5

card with that stack number is your target. Begin to let cards drop from the face of your packet back onto the rest of the deck, stopping one card before reaching your target (having a quick look or two at the face of your packet will always tell you exactly where you stand).[3]

Take the packet into the left hand again and once more assume the pose of the "Human Scale", this time holding your arms in almost horizontal position. Say *"Ah. One more."* Again take the packet into your right hand and let one last, single card drop from the face of the packet onto the rest of the deck.[4] Replace the packet into your left hand and hold out your arms one last time, this time indicating that perfect balance is reached (Photo 5).

Hand your packet to a spectator on your left and pick up the rest of the deck to demonstrate how you want them both to count: They are to deal their cards simultaneously, turning each card face up into a pile onto the table in front of them. Give the signal and count along in a loud voice, indicating a comfortable speed to which they both count their cards in sync. End with: *"...fifteen, sixteen, and both exactly seventeen!"* (in our example). Not only do they have the same amount, but also the exact number you named!

The two spectators counting together and reaching the same number is a very clear picture and quite memorable. You could well end the routine at this point. The following phase, however, introduces a new phenomenon: Apparently, you not only have a feeling for cards but also for people: Just by looking at someone you can tell how many cards he is going to cut!

PHASE III – Knowing in advance how many cards someone is going to cut

Here's a quick overview of this last phase: You officially commit to a number by removing three specific cards from the deck and placing them aside. The sum of those three cards' values, you explain, will be the number the spectator will cut. In fact, only two cards are placed aside as three, and after the spectator has cut off a packet, a third card is secretly added to the two to make the correct sum.

This makes good use of the fact that the last two cards in the Tamariz stack are an Ace and a Nine: The Ace can count as one or eleven, so the two cards can sum either ten or twenty. (If you are using the Aronson stack, exchange the Ace of Spades and the Two of Clubs before the routine – stack numbers 6 and 51, respectively. This will bring you into the same position without affecting the rest of the routine; everything else works as described.)[5]

Let's resume the description at the end of the second phase: You are left with about one third of the deck in your hands and about a third each face up in front of two spectators. The following actions will put the deck back in memorized order, and at the same time distribute the bottom two cards and the top card at three different positions somewhere in the deck:

In the packet in your hands, cut the bottom two cards to the top. Immediately follow with a slip cut, bringing the new top card anywhere into the middle of the packet. Add the packet from the spectator on your left to the top (the packet with the higher stack numbers, 18 to 34 in our example), followed by the packet from the spectator on your right (the top portion of the deck). Finally, execute another slip cut, slipping the top card (stack number 1) somewhere into the upper third of the deck. These actions take about ten seconds and are done unhurriedly during the reactions to the previous phase.

Position check: The deck is in memorized order with the exception of the original top card (stack number 1) and the bottom two cards (an Ace and a Nine), which are dis-

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[3] You may want to practice letting single cards escape from your thumb. Like this, you can start by dribbling a few cards and then drop cards one by one to fine-tune.

[4] For this last card I actually use a pinky pull-down to take a break above it. This allows you to drop the card while holding the packet at the very fingertips (instead of having to bend it slightly as when releasing a single card without a break). It looks better and helps to dramatize the moment (this is the one card that literally "tips the scale").

[5] If you are using any other memorized order, you may need to exchange some cards to adjust accordingly.

6

tributed at three different positions somewhere in the deck.

Continuing the presentation, mention that there came a point when your heightened card-sense got almost scary: *"After a few years"*, you say, *"I realized I would often know how many cards people would cut – before they cut."* I usually punctuate this statement with a gesture as if to say *"oh oh – spooky"* (Photo 6). *"It depends on the type of person, you know: Sometimes, I sit in a cafe and observe the people passing by, and I know: 'Ah, seventeen, twenty-eight.'"* Unperturbed by the laughter, address a spectator in front of you and offer to put your strange people-skills to the test.

Explain that if you told him his number, he could not cut freely anymore, so to commit yourself you will take out three cards, tailor-made for him. Spread through the deck with the faces towards yourself, and eye-up the spectator apparently trying to determine what "cutting-type" he is. Outjog first the Ace and then the Nine, letting one or two spectators on the side see what values you choose for him. Ask him whether he usually cuts with the right hand or the left and no matter what his reply nod knowingly and upjog the last of your three arranged cards (stack number 1 – the Four of Clubs when using the Tamariz stack) without letting its face be seen by anyone.

Take out all three cards and casually move the Four to the face of the packet. Hold everything face down with the three cards slightly spread in the right hand and explain: *"When we add the values of those three cards together, like in Blackjack, the sum must be exactly the number you cut!"*

During this, momentarily place the three cards square on top of the deck to free your right hand to gesture. When everything is understood, apparently count the three cards off the deck into the right hand and place them onto the table in a small packet. In fact, however, count two cards as three using Dai Vernon's Perfect-Pitch false count.[6] Briefly: Push the top card to the right and take it in right-hand dealing position pulling it off the deck with a distinct "snap" sound. Apparently take the next card the same way but in fact momentarily

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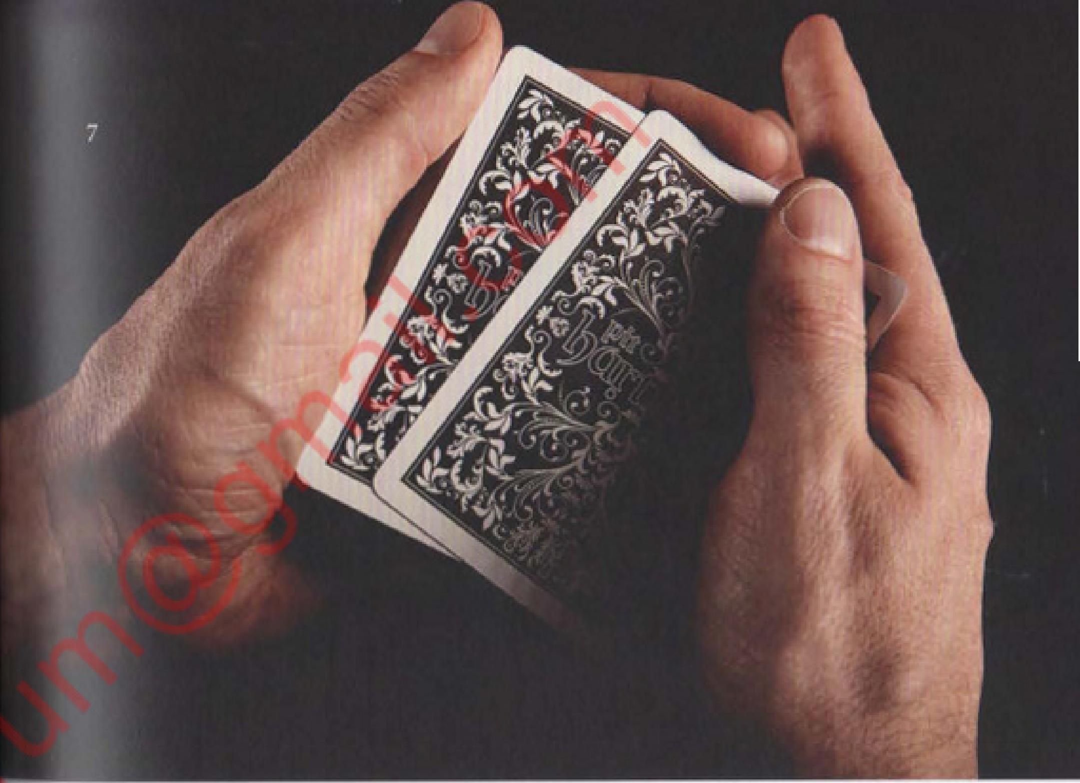
[6] *The Vernon Chronicles Volume I*, (Minch, 1987), page 90.



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bring the first card back over the deck, still holding it clipped between the right thumb and base of the first finger (Photo 7) and brush it over the deck a second time. Without breaking the rhythm pull the next card off the deck on top of the first. Three distinct snaps are heard, and done in a steady rhythm the illusion of having taken three cards is perfect.

Table the small packet in front of you and immediately place the deck in front of the spectator, asking him to cut off a packet. He can cut anywhere from eleven to thirty-one cards. If you feel he has cut too many or too few simply ask him to *"take a small packet."* (I usually add that he should not try to *"go against his nature"* and give him a smile. Just remember to keep it light. In most cases no such prompting will be necessary.)

When the spectator has taken a packet, say: *"Very good. Now, we want this to be precise. You have three options: You can say 'Ok, that's fine'. Or you can say 'Well, it feels almost right, but I think I'd rather have one more'; then I'd give you one. Or you can say 'I think I have one card too many, I'd rather give one back'. Which is it going to be?"*

As you say *"...then I'd give you one"*, reach over to the rest of the deck and briefly take the top card, indicating that he can have it if he wants. During this casual gesture, hold

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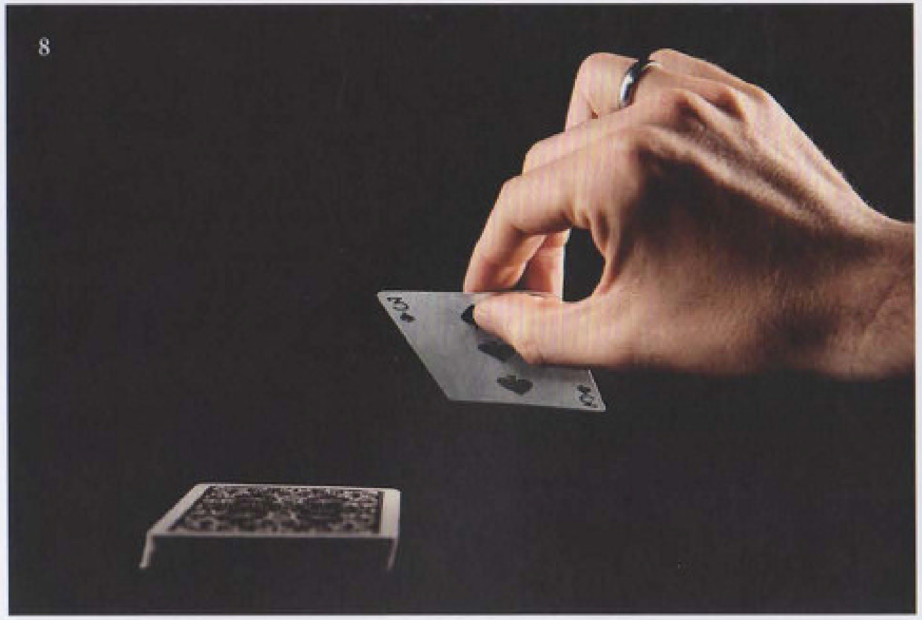

the card so you can see its face (Photo 8) and remember it before replacing it back on top of the packet. This, of course, tells you how many cards he is holding (one less than the glimpsed card's stack number).

I actually try to provoke some kind of adjustment at this point. Sometimes, the spectator will ask for two more cards or to give two back, which is great, as it can be nicely "milked" (*"Two more? That's quite unusual!"*). All of this helps to emphasize the all-important freedom at this point.

No matter what the spectator decides, do as he wishes, giving him one or more cards from the rest of the deck or having him put some cards back. In any case you will know how many cards he has.

You will now secretly add a card to the small prediction-packet, the value depending on how many cards the spectator has. There is nothing to calculate; just add a card corresponding to the last digit of his number: If he has eighteen cards, add an Eight. If has twenty-five, add a Five and so on.

Finding and adding the card is quite straightforward: Cut a card of the required value to the top (see "Cutting a card to the top" on page 56)[7] and as you ask the spectator if he himself knows how many cards he has, classic palm the card in the right hand.[8] Place the deck down and say, *"Judging from the kind of person you are, I would say twenty."* (Naming, of course, the correct number.) *"In any case, I am committed."*

To these words slide the small prediction-packet off the table with the right hand adding the palmed card on top, and immediately hand the three cards to a spectator on your side. Ask him to hand you the first card from the packet. Show it, name its value and ask for the next card. At this point casually say to him: *"You have already seem them, of course. Just for the others."* As he has indeed seen two of the cards when you originally removed them from the deck he will nod his head in agreement. To the rest of the audience it might appear that he had seen all three, negating, of course, any possibility of a switch.

The second card will be the Ace. Add it, counting it as one or eleven as needed. Finally, he hands you the last card and you add it to reach the total you just mentioned.

To finish, have the spectator count his packet in a loud voice, counting along (and maybe making the audience join in) – he holds the exact number of cards you had foreseen for him.

RETURNING HOME

Place the card you had secretly added to the prediction-packet back on top of the packet in your hands. Cut this packet to its original position (stack number 50 on the face). Replace the Ace and Nine on bottom. Correct any adjustments the spectator may have made in the last phase, placing one or more cards from the packet in your hands back to the spectator's packet or vice-versa. Finally place the spectator's packet back on top. (In case he reversed the order of his packet while counting, shuffle his packet back on top, running the cards singly.)

(If you are using the Aronson stack, don't forget to exchange the Ace of Spades and Two of Clubs again.)

COMMENTS

It is often said that "counting-tricks" are boring. While this is certainly true in many cases, it is only half the story. In fact, counting can be terribly dull in one trick and a great source of drama and suspense in another. I think there is a distinction to be made: There are tricks in which counting is part of the method and those in which counting is part of the effect.

Examples of the former include dealing several piles with the same number of cards or having a spectator deal to a freely chosen number and then remember the card at that position in the rest of the deck, as required for certain mathematical principles.

Plots in which counting is part of the effect on the other hand include classics like Cards Across, Weighing the Cards or Any Card at Any Number. Needless to say it is recommended one reserves counting primarily for routines in the latter category, and I believe "The Heavyweight" is a good example of that.

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[7] Even though you are not holding a full deck at this point, there will always be at least one card of the required value left in the packet. This is true whether you are using the Aronson or the Tamariz stack. If using any other memorized order, make sure to check this before performing "The Heavyweight".

[8] I recommend Vernon's "Topping the Deck" from *Select Secrets* (Vernon, 1941/49) page 7.

Avoiding monotony

Even when the counting is part of the effect and has all the meaning and relevance in the world, it still takes time. An effect that relies too much on counting easily becomes boring no matter what. In "The Heavyweight", a total of five packets are counted. A number of strategies are used to avoid monotony in the various phases of the routine:

Phase I: Putting focus elsewhere

At the very beginning a large packet is counted, but nobody is really watching: The actual counting is covered (almost "misdirected" from) by the performer delivering a short speech. Only at the very end of the count is the focus brought back to the packet to achieve a clear effect.

Phase I ½ : Making it short

In this quick phase another packet is counted, but the time required is very short: There are only very few cards and the performer counts the packet himself.

Phase II: Creating an interesting situation

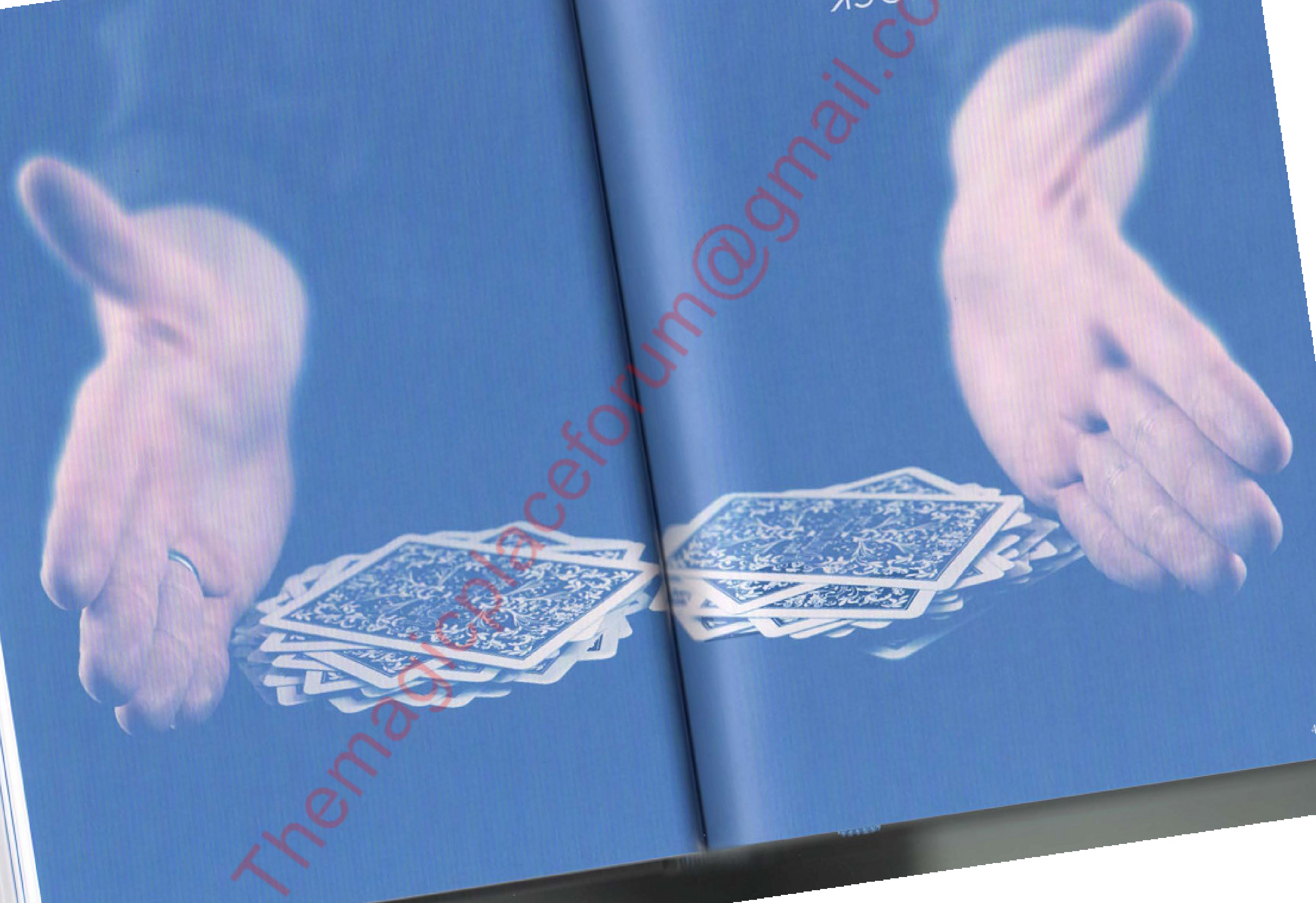
In this phase two packets are counted together. Thus, the required time is halved and the staging with two spectators counting their packets in sync creates an interesting picture.

Phase III: Using suspense

Finally, in the last phase, full use is made of counting's potential to build suspense.

In the last phase, the spectator can cut between eleven and thirty-one cards; these are the limits that can be covered by adding one card to the Ace and the Nine in the prediction-packet. In case of emergency, however, nothing prevents you from adding a Queen or King and counting them as twelve or thirteen. This covers numbers up to thirty-three. While not strictly in accord with the game of Blackjack as you originally said, no one will question it. It is just an option to keep in mind; the day might come when you are glad to have it.

Sherlock



Sherlock

The year 1919 saw the publication of Charles Jordan's book Thirty Card Mysteries. That work's seminal first chapter "Trailing the Dovetail Shuffle to its Lair" contains a number of clever location effects which, remarkably, make use of a stacked deck even after the cards have been repeatedly shuffled.[1]

"Sherlock" results from an attempt to make Jordan's ingenious but somewhat long-winded operations more practical: Not only does a presentational premise make the procedure itself quite entertaining, it also allows you to undo two riffle shuffles right in front of the audience.[2]

EFFECT

Off in a far corner of the room, a spectator takes any card from the deck. He remembers it and puts it back anywhere he likes before the deck is shuffled. Only now does the performer touch the cards. He proceeds to track down the selection through a stringent process of elimination and logic that would have made Arthur Conan Doyle flinch.

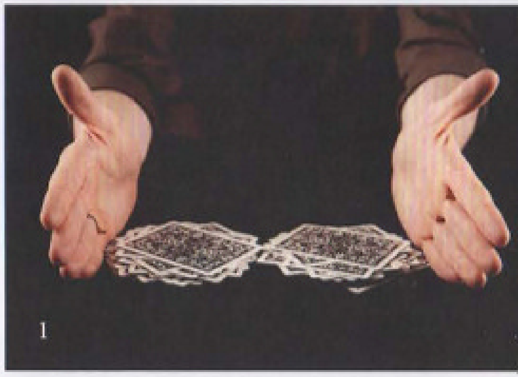
METHOD OVERVIEW

After the free selection and return of a card, the deck is given two riffle shuffles (and multiple cuts, if desired). This results in four interlocking chains of cards. Starting on the face of the deck, the chains are followed by removing cards in the original (memorized) order. This automatically leads to one card out of position – the selection. At the same time the order of the deck is being restored.

PERFORMANCE

Tell your audience of the never-ending quest among magicians for the ideal, truly impossible card trick and eventually demonstrate: *"The perfect card trick would go something like this."* Give the cards a casual false shuffle before handing them to a spectator. Invite him to retreat to a far-off corner of the room and to *"take any card out of the deck."* Wait till he informs you that he has done so and then ask him to look at the card and remember it before putting it back anywhere into the deck and return to the rest of the group.[3]

Immediately have the deck shuffled, making sure a riffle shuffle is used. In the U.S., it may suffice to hand the deck to someone who has been noted to habitually shuffle riffle-style and tell him to *"give the deck a shuffle"* (maybe together with a gesture to indicate a riffle shuffle). In Europe and other places where the riffle shuffle is less common, it may be necessary to ask for someone who can shuffle the cards *"like in the casinos"*, or else instruct a spectator to cut the deck in half and riffle (or even just push) the two halves together. Lennart Green's Rosetta Shuffle[4], where the packets are twisted and meshed together is also a good option (Photo 1). The key is to handle the instructions casually and, if anything, make the "extra-thorough" riffle shuffle seem a bonus rather than a restriction.



Let someone cut the cards and immediately have the deck (riffle) shuffled again.

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[1] While often credited as the originator of the concept, Charles Jordan was not the first to use a stack after a (single) riffle-shuffle: As Jordan himself readily notes in the introduction to his book, he was preceded in that by Charles O. Williams whose method for "Reading the Fifty-two Cards After a Genuine Shuffle" can be found in Stanyon's *Magic*, Volume 13 No 12, September 1913, page 100. The first to have published this principle as applied to a memorized deck may have been Simon Aronson. His brillant effects "Some People Think" and "Lie Sleuth", originally appeared in *Kabbala Volume* 2, number 8 in April 1973 page 57-60 (also found in Bound To Please (Simon Aronson, 1994), page 3 and 5, respectively). Another effect using a related method is "Duplicity" on page 80 in this book.

[2] Not surprisingly, Juan Tamariz has been openly undoing multiple riffle shuffles for decades, see for example his effect "La Bomba", *Sinfonía en Mnemónica Mayor* (Tamariz, 2000), page 63, called "T.N.T." on page 223 of the English Edition, *Mnemonica*, (Tamariz, Minch, 2004). For a very early example in print of undoing a (single) riffle shuffle see "A Prophecied Discovery" in The *L.W. Card Mysteries* (Page Wright, Larsen, 1928) page 4.

[3] Giving the instructions in two steps like this ensures that the spectator does in fact fully remove a card from the deck. If you told him right away to *"take out any card, remember it and put it back"*, he might simply pull a card half way out or even just open the deck at some spot and look at a card. In both cases, the card would remain in its original position making it impossible to identify it later.

[4] While independently invented and popularized by Lennart Green, a similar way of doing a riffle shuffle was previously published as part of Charles Nyquist and Jack McMillen's "The San Francisco Shuffle" in *Genii*, Vol. 14 No. 3, Nov. 1949, page 76.

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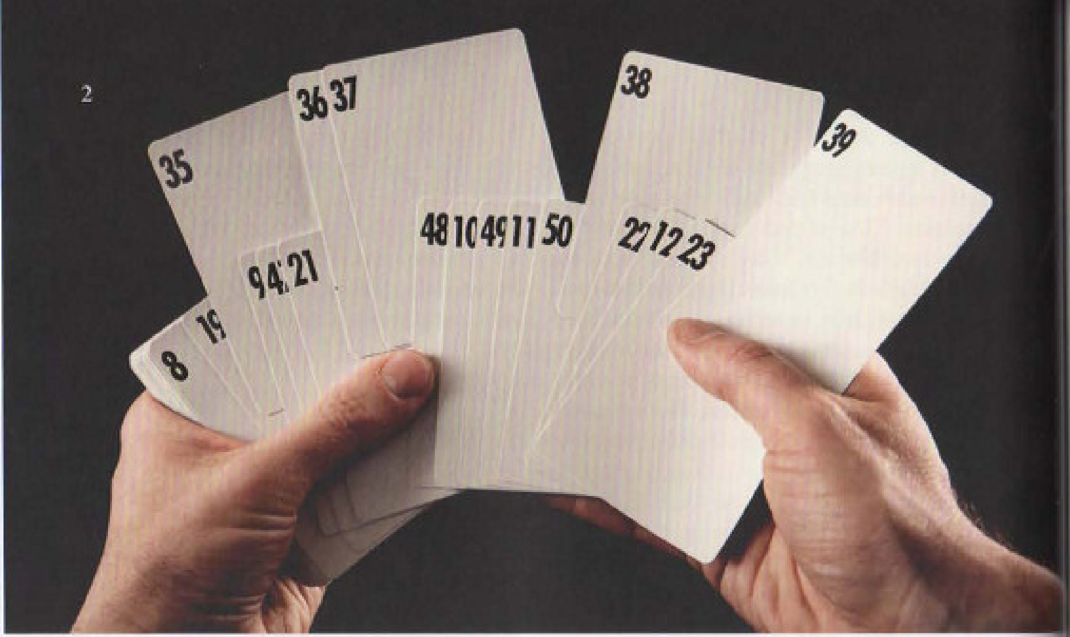

Requesting a second shuffle should already feel like overdoing it a bit. Ideally, spectators should feel something like *"Enough already; I get it – the cards are mixed!"*

At this point, pause and recap: A card was freely selected, replaced anywhere into the deck, the cards were shuffled and you haven't touched a thing. Let this sink in for a second before saying: *"The only problem is: Under these conditions I cannot actually find the card. But apart from that, it really is a great trick!"*

After the laughter (or booing) has calmed down, continue: *"Maybe it is not necessary to find the card. As Arthur Conan Doyle let the great Sherlock Holmes say: 'Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth.' So"*, you conclude, *"we just need to eliminate all the cards that were not chosen, and whichever remains must be yours. Brilliant!"*

Getting to work, matter-of-factly say: *"There are, of course, cards that are never selected. So for starters, we can eliminate all those."*

You will now go through the deck a total of three times, each time eliminating about a quarter of the deck: Hold the deck with the faces towards yourself. Upjog the card on the face of the deck and note its stack number. Spread until you come to the card whose stack number is one lower, in other words, the card that precedes the upjogged card in the stack (it will be very near the first one). Upjog that card as well. Go on like this, counting backwards and upjogging cards in (reversed) memorized order, ignoring all other cards in between. Continue until you reach the end of the deck.

Photo 2 shows an example (actual cards are replaced with stack numbers). As you can see, cards are simply upjogged in their normal order, no matter which and how many other cards have been shuffled between them.

After this first run-through, strip out the upjogged cards and place them to the side in a face-down pile. As this first bunch is eliminated, remember its last card (the last one you had upjogged).

Briefly false shuffle the remaining three quarters of the deck and continue the presentation: *"All these cards are sometimes selected..."*, and then, addressing your spectator: *"...but not by you!"*

Recall the last card you upjogged and begin the new round of elimination with the card that precedes it in the stack; in other words, simply continue where you left off. (At the beginning of each new round, should you ever forget where you are in the sequence, you can always pick up and show the top card of the eliminated pile, under cover of some comment.)

As you go through the deck the second time, further upjogging cards in reverse memorized order, occasionally glance at the spectator as if assessing him. Allegedly, you are eliminating all the cards he would not pick. You might show one of the cards to another spectator, saying: *"You might have chosen that one"*, and then address

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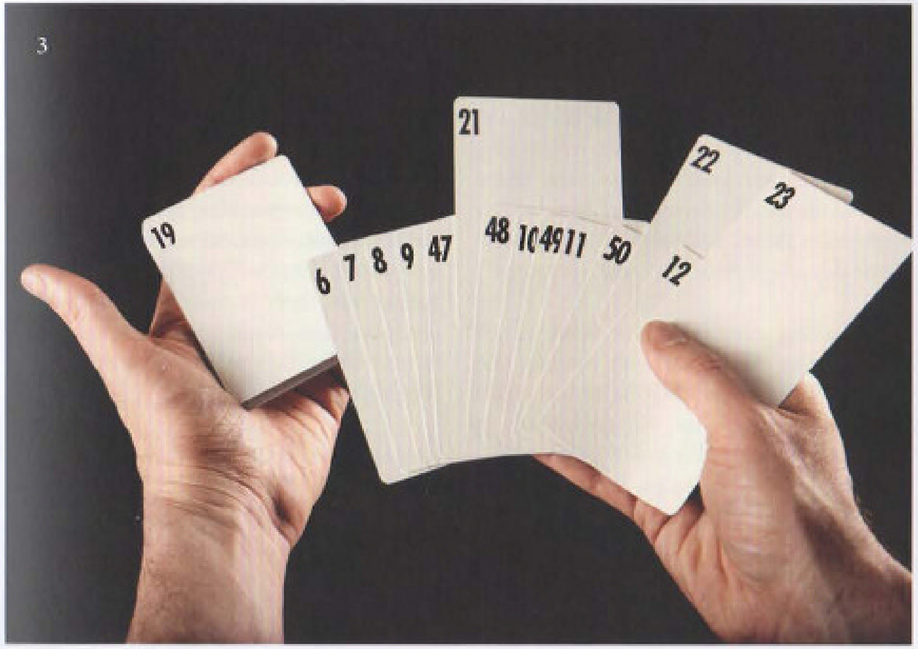

your spectator again: *"...but not you!"* As before, continue till you come to the end of the packet, strip out the upjogged cards (another quarter of the deck, roughly) and place them face down onto the previously eliminated packet.

At some point during one of the run-throughs you may find a card missing from the sequence (see Photo 3: In this example, after card number 21 there is no number 20, but a few cards further there is already number 19). The missing card will be the selection. Ignore it for now. Just continue to the next card in order and keep going.
After the second round of elimination, again give the remainder of the deck a quick false shuffle and tell your spectator: *"These are all cards you might select. But not today!"*

For the third and last round, again start with the next card in sequence, just where you left off and go through the packet exactly as before. (Again, to keep everything lively, you might want to show and name some of the cards, remarking: *"This one you might have picked yesterday. That one maybe the day after tomorrow – but not today!"*)

After having eliminated the third bunch of cards you will be left with roughly one quarter of the deck. Looking at the cards, most of the time you will find them in memorized order with exactly one exception; somewhere in the packet will be one card out of sequence (in case there isn't, see the comments). Keep this card and place all of the others face down onto the rest of the deck. Briefly remind everybody of the conditions and for the first time have the spectator name his selection. Resist the temptation to say *"Elementary, my dear Watson"* and show the card to end.

RETURNING HOME

"Sherlock" is a round trip – at the end of the trick, the deck has returned to memorized order.

COMMENTS

I recommend really making a spectator go to a far-off corner of the room for the selection of a card. Nothing dramatizes freedom of choice and absence of control better than distance. (When talking to the spectator at that point I actually cup my hands around my mouth and shout. The situation can be very memorable.)

There is a small chance that "Sherlock" will not work: Not only can it happen that the spectator coincidentally replaces his card at the exact same spot he took it from, the card can also accidentally be brought to its original position during one of the shuffles. In those cases, when looking at the last packet, there will be no card out of sequence and there is no way to identify the selection. The cards will, however, be in memorized order, so you will still have a very strong finish:

Simply place the deck on the table, remarking that all is set and that you will not touch the cards again. Have the selection named and proceed to find it using the marvel that is "Mnemonicosis"[5]. (Briefly: Force a cut at or near the card by instructing the spectator to *"cut off a small packet"* or *"cut a good portion, well more than half"*, or similar, depending on the card's position. Have the cut-off packet placed onto the table face up to see where you are and then have a small number named, or use the value of the card in view (the one that was cut to), or a spectator's name, or your own name, etc. to count to the selected card as needed.)[6]

While "Sherlock" is quite simple in concept (it's really just removing cards in memorized order), and basically self-working (other than a few recommended false shuffles there are no sleights), it requires some practice to keep up a good rhythm: It helps to throw in the occasional amusing comment (a few suggestions are given in the text), look at the audience from time to time and generally try to keep a reasonably brisk pace. As Juan Tamariz advises in context of his previously mentioned trick "T.N.T.": "Bring the trick alive. Introduce verbal bits of wit and give it as much rhythm as you can." To do that well, you need to know your stack cold.

Apart from being a strong piece of magic, "Sherlock" also serves a valuable function in a longer set: From the performance of this trick on, you can always (truthfully) remind your audience that the deck has been thoroughly shuffled ("like in a casino"). Especially when done with restraint and in conjunction with further false shuffles, this can add greatly to any subsequent effects using the stack.

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[5] "Mnemonicosis", *Sinfonia en Mnemónica Mayor* (Tamariz, 2000), page 129. See page 97 of the English edition Mnemonica (Tamariz and Minch, 2004). See also "Fingertip Miracle" in *Faro Notes* (Marlo, 1958), page 33.

[6] Remember, "Mnemonicosis" is the trick of which Tamariz says in *Mnemonica*: "Of all the effects in this book, this is the one that has caused the strongest impression on spectators, whether laymen or magicians, during the twenty-two years or more that I have been performing it." And at another place: "I insist, this is not just another trick. It has the appearance of a miracle." (This, of course, proudly distinguishes "Sherlock" as being the first trick where the "out" is stronger than the original effect.)

Close Encounters

Close Encounters

This quick routine was a stroke of luck: Improvised during a performance at the 2008 "Gathering 4 Gardner" in Atlanta, it's remained largely unchanged and has been part of my repertoire ever since.

EFFECT

Three spectators each remove a card from one deck and insert it anywhere into a second deck. Amazingly, all three placed their cards exactly next to their duplicates in the other deck.

METHOD OVERVIEW

The matching cards are moved next to the inserted cards via a spread cull.

PERFORMANCE

Start by introducing the premise: *"Did you know that cards from different decks know each other? It's true: When cards visit another deck they often get together to talk or have a drink. Here let me show you..."*

Have a spectator shuffle a deck of cards while you false shuffle a memorized deck. Spread her shuffled deck face up on the table and ask a spectator to remove any card.

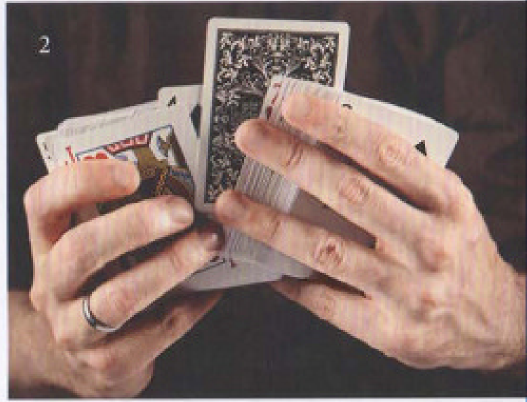
1

As soon as you see which card she takes (Photo 1), give your deck an estimated cut to bring that card to somewhere among the top ten cards or so (but not higher than third from the top). By glimpsing the bottom card in the process, you will know the card's exact position.

As you spread your deck face down between your hands and invite the spectator to insert her card anywhere face up, secretly steal the corresponding card from your deck under the spread. Wherever the spectator places her face-up card into the spread, quietly load the culled card above it (Photo 2). Resist the temptation to whistle innocently.

Repeat the same process with a second spectator. (When counting to the card you need to cull, keep in mind that the previous selection is missing from its original spot.)

For the third spectator, the procedure is slightly different: Have the spectator remove a card from the face-up spread and cut that card near the top in your deck just



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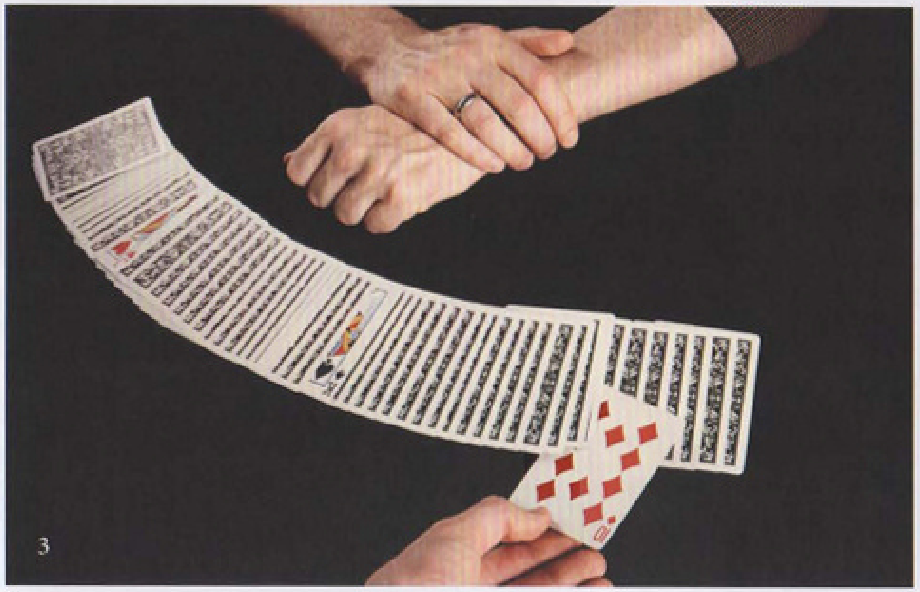

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as before. This time, however, spread your deck face down alongside the other, lean back and ask the third spectator to do *"just like the others"* gesturing for him to place his card face up anywhere into the face-down spread (Photo 3).

The openness at this point is crucial. By now it is clear what the third spectator is to do, there is no need to explain much, and so you just spread your deck, lean back and tell him to go ahead. This complete indifference is quite disarming: It emphasizes that everything is above board and creates the image you want to be remembered. By saying *"just like the others"* the fairness rubs off on the previous cards: You don't care about the third card, and this implies that nothing fishy was going on with the first two, either. As Juan Tamariz says: "The first two cards bathe in the truth of the third."

Unfortunately, however, we are not real magicians so the dirty work has to be done at some point, and that time is now: Pick up the deck and briefly spread it between your hands using the spread cull to position the corresponding card directly above the third spectator's selection just like you did with the previous two. Finally spread the deck face down on the table again, in the same position as before.

The cover for this otherwise unmotivated action (picking up the deck only to re-spread it on the table a moment later) is attitude: You spread through the deck seemingly just to confirm the situation to yourself: *"So, we should have three cards from that deck in this deck. Three visitors. Good."* Done matter-of-factly, this casual spreading appears unplanned and unimportant and will be forgotten a second later.

Switch back to Performing Mode[1] and build a little suspense: Until now, the spectators are not quite sure yet, what this is all about, and this is a good moment to elaborate a little on the premise from the beginning: *"When cards visit from another deck they often call their friends to say 'Hey, I am in the area, you want to hang out?' And sometimes – they meet."*

Let this sink in and after a short pause clearly push out the first face-up card together with the face-down card directly above it. Slowly turn that card over to reveal a perfect match. Repeat with the other two in increasing pace to finish (Photo 4).

RETURNING HOME

To restore memorized order, the three cards have to be replaced in their original positions. Before describing a way to do that inconspicuously, let me mention a technique that will be part of the handling and prove useful in many other situations as well:

Using a lift shuffle to cut the deck at a specific spot

Hold the deck in the right hand in position for a face-up overhand shuffle, that is, with the faces of the cards towards the left. With your left thumb chop off a small packet. As you bring your hands back together for the next shuffling action, the right hand quite naturally comes over the first packet. The packet is clipped at its shorts sides between the right thumb and third finger and lifted away with the rest of the deck as the left thumb chops off the next packet. In other

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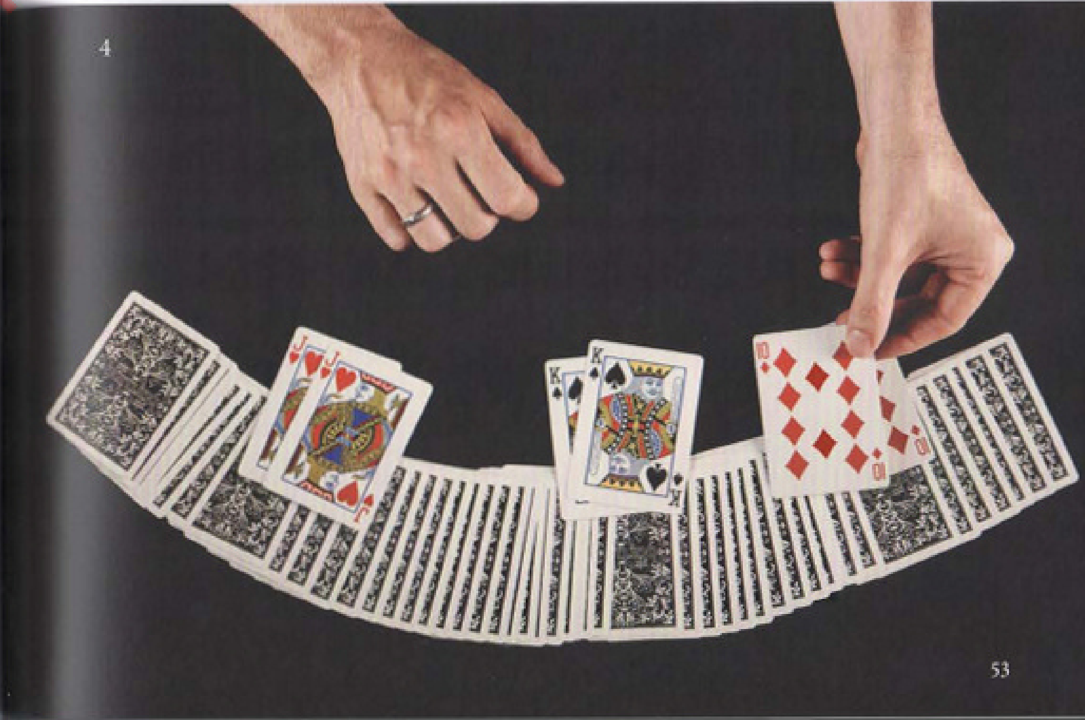
[1] For more on this temporary change of attitude see "Method and Style and The Performing Mode" in *Card Fictions* (Hartling, 2003), page 30.



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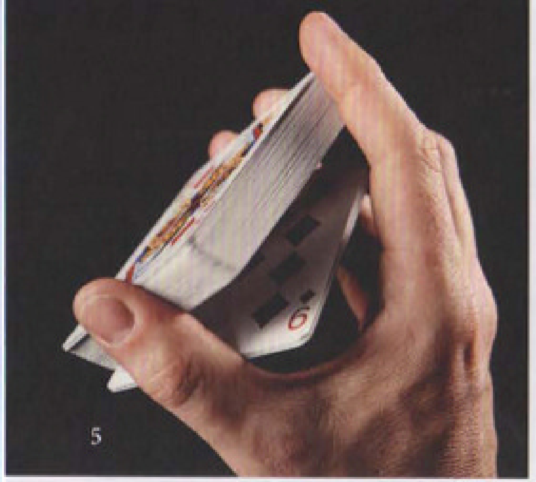

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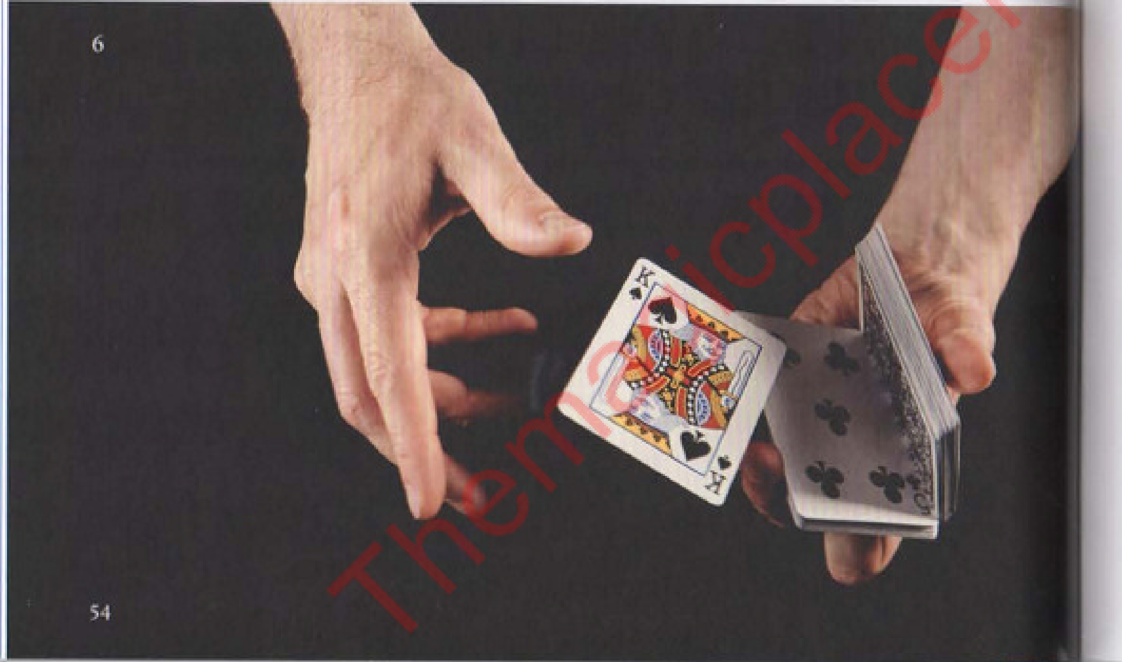
words, as the second packet is taken, the first is stolen back behind the deck. Don't try to square the stolen packet with the rest of the deck; in fact, there is large gap between the two (Photo 5, left hand omitted for clarity). Continue like this, chopping off packets with your left thumb and at the same time stealing the previous packet back behind the deck. You are, in effect, just repeatedly cutting the deck, making it look like an overhand shuffle.[2]

This can easily be used to cut the deck at a certain position: As the cards are face up, you can constantly see where you are in memorized order. When you get near the point where you want to cut the deck, start running single cards instead of packets (stealing each back behind the deck as usual). Continue like this until you come to the desired spot and simply stop by dropping everything from the right hand on top of the left. Armed with this, it is now time to look at one possible handling for replacing three cards:



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Replacing three cards to their positions
Use a face-up lift shuffle as described to cut the deck at a spot where one of the three cards belongs. (In other words, to "sort it back in", one of the three cards would just go onto the face of the deck.) However, do not place this card on the deck yet.

Instead, of the other two cards, take the one whose stack-position is currently closer to the face of the deck. Hold this card on the fingers of the right hand and spread the face-up deck above it. (The card is riding under the spread as if it had just been culled.) Insert the card at its position and keep spreading until you come to the spot where the third card belongs. Hold a break there and square the deck. Place the card that belongs into the break onto the face of the deck and use a slip cut to send it to its position. Immediately give the deck a Charlier Cut, but not without throwing the last card between the two halves as they coalesce (Photo 6). All three cards are at their positions – the deck is back in memorized order.

COMMENTS

The presentation given is just an example. While the silliness and absurdity of the personification of playing cards works embarrassingly well for me, I suspect this may not be the case for everyone. Fortunately, due to its clear effect "Close Encounters" lends itself to other presentational approaches as well.

Note that instead of having cards named as usual, here cards are openly removed from a face-up spread. Not only is this a very clear image (the whole range of choice is presented to the spectator), it also buys time, as it allows you to see the target-card at the earliest possible moment; many times a full second or two before the spectator has completely removed it from the spread.

"Close Encounters" is a good example of a central concept in memorized-deck magic: The Open Index. That is, you have quick access to any card.[3] In this case it is even quicker than usual because the estimated cut only has to bring the target-card somewhere near the top. No corrections will usually be needed.

The quickness of access, together with the direct placements of the cards via the spread cull is what makes this effect quite strong: There simply seems no way (let alone time!) to find the right cards and place them in the right positions unnoticed – much less without looking at the faces of the cards. Yet, this is exactly what you do. Such is the power of the memorized deck.

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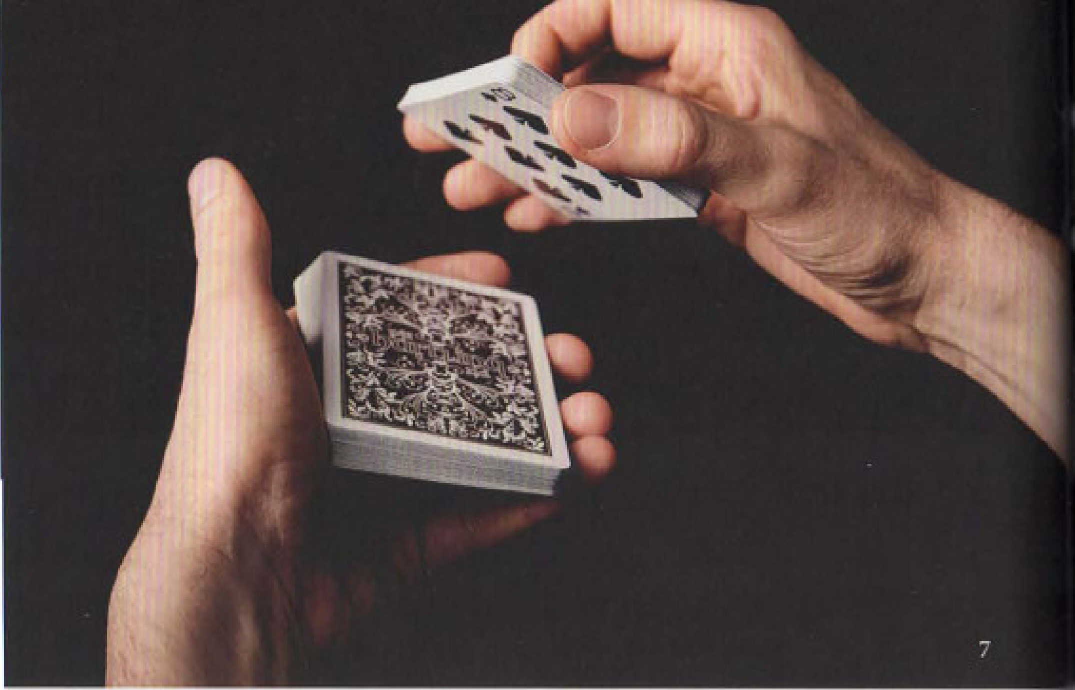
[2] The handling of the lift shuffle as a continuous action (with a pick-up movement in every shuffle action, making it a complete false shuffle) was described by Tom Munroe as "An Easy False Shuffle" in *The Linking Ring Vol. 29 No. 1*, Mar. 1949, page 49.

[3] For a comprehensive analysis of this and related topics I highly recommend Simons Aronson's excellent article "The Open Index", *Simply Simon* (Aronson, 1995), page 222. Further examples in this book include "Echoes", "Just Like That", and the routines in the chapter "Quartets".



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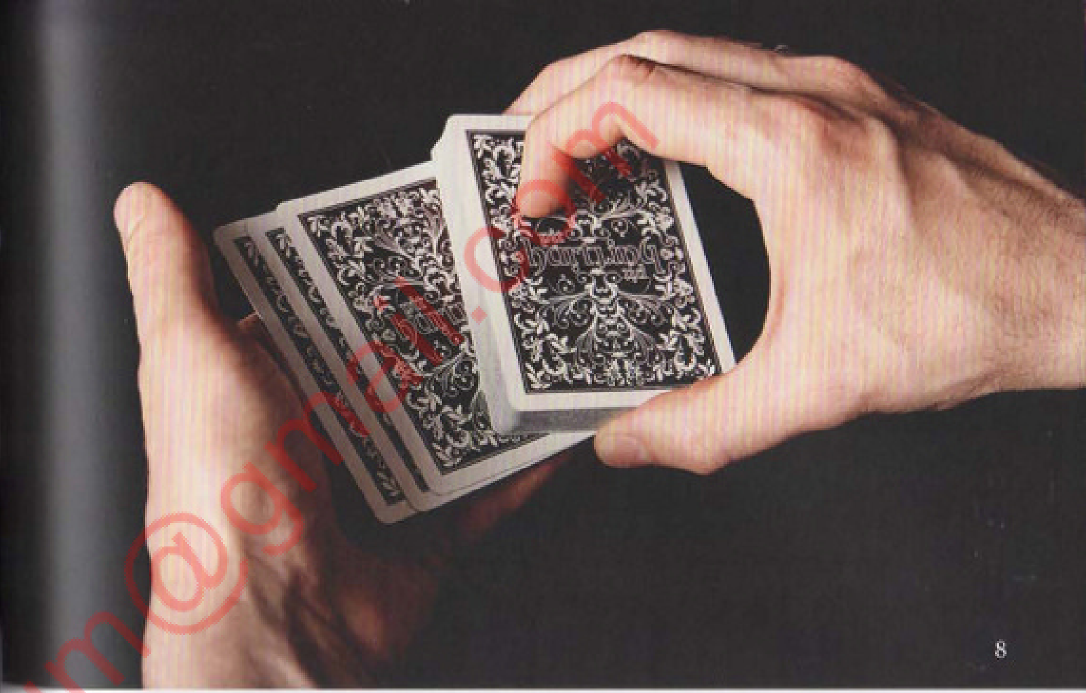

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CUTTING A CARD TO THE TOP

While in the above routine the cards only ever need to be cut near the top, it is a frequent requirement in memorized-deck magic to secretly cut a certain card to the (exact) top of the deck. In fact, it is such a utility maneuver that it merits its own quick explanation. There are two aspects to this, one technical and one concerning timing and appearance. Let's first look at the physical procedure:

Estimated Cut(s) with Glimpse(s)

Start with the deck in left-hand dealing position. With the right hand, cut off a packet, trying to hit the desired spot by estimation. As you lift the packet, tilt it just enough to catch a glimpse of the card on its face (Photo 7) and immediately continue the movement, placing the packet under the rest of the deck. In other words, you give the deck an estimated cut, during which you look at the card you happened to hit. This card will tell you where you are.

If you hit the right spot: Excellent, you're done. Many times, however, you will have missed by some cards in either direction. If you are off by only a few cards (up to three, say) this is corrected as explained below. If the cut was off by more, immediately follow with a second estimated cut (again glimpsing the bottom card of the cut-off packet in the process). This fine-tuning cut, if not itself hitting the target, should bring you close enough to follow with the exact correction. (If not, just make another cut. Even if several cuts are needed, as long as you do them in a relaxed manner and without hesitation you will be fine.)

Corrections

Having gotten close to the desired card, it only remains to correct by moving very few cards from top to bottom or vice versa.

Transferring a small number of cards from top to bottom can be done by feel: With a little practice it is easily possible to cut one, two or three cards without breaks or counting (personally, four is where it starts to become unreliable for me).

For the other direction – bottom to top – use either a buckle (single or double) or a "smearing" action: The left fingers are used to slide the bottom card(s) to the left (Photo 8) and cut them to the top. (Again, three is about the limit for me to do that quickly and reliably.)

Appearance

Secretly cutting a card to the top should appear as if you are really doing nothing – or at least nothing important. While the actions should be done without hesitation, the key is not to try to get the card to the top "quickly", but rather calmly. It is better to make a rough estimate and allow yourself a few corrections done in an open and relaxed manner than trying for a "good" cut and hesitate or appear to be gauging the deck.

Context and cover

Depending on the context, there may be very little heat on the action: You might be locating cards before the trick has apparently really started or you may bring cards to the top that you don't even seemingly know.[4] In these cases no special cover is needed.

On other occasions, however, you will openly ask for a card (or a value) and then secretly locate that card (or one of that value).[5] In these cases, there is the danger of attracting unwanted attention: If you hold the deck still, ask for a card, and suddenly snap into action, it will look exactly like what it is: You will be seen to be "doing something."

A good way to avoid this is to start with the deck already in motion: As you ask for a card, casually give the deck a few simple in-the-hand false cuts.[6] These cuts serve to establish that you are absent-mindedly "toying with the deck." After just a few seconds, spectators are effectively conditioned to dismiss any further cuts as unimportant and basically overlook them. The estimated cuts and corrections to bring the named card to the top, then, will just seem a continuation of your harmless "toying" which makes them all but psychologically invisible. (At the same time, the cuts should be done in a casual manner and stopped as early as possible to avoid the impression that you are constantly fidgeting with the cards.)

Bringing a named card to the top can be an exceptionally strong effect in itself, as famously demonstrated by Bert Allerton. Robert Parrish writes in *The Close-Up Magician*:

"A card was named while Bert toyed with the deck, cutting the desired pasteboard of course to the top. As though all at once paying attention and summoning his forces, Bert laid the deck on the table and asked someone to place a salt cellar on top of the deck. Then turning to the person who had made the request, he asked: "What was that card?" Upon having named it, the spectator was asked to raise the cellar, and beneath it, as though in response to his thought, lay the correct card."[7]

But now, after so much cutting cards to the top, let's have a look at the next routine, and with it, a whole different concept.

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[4] A good example of the latter is "Echoes" on page 92.

[5] This applies to some of the routines in the section "Quartets" for example, see page 116.

[6] You may, for example, cut a small packet from the bottom to the top and hold a break. Continue cutting small packets to the top and eventually cut to the break to return the deck to original order.

[7] *The Close-Up Magician* (Allerton, Parrish 1958), "Tricks with a Stacked Deck", page 37. Notice how in these modest few lines there are mentioned the strategy of toying with the deck as the card is named, the concept of "Performing" vs. "Non-Performing Mode" ("As though all at once paying attention and summoning his forces,...") and the technique of seemingly not hearing the spectator's answer and asking for the card again when everything is already done.

The Core

The Core

The inspiration for this piece was Al Koran's "Headline Countdown"[1]*. In that effect, a double sheet of newspaper is torn into sixteen pieces and a named number counted down to arrive at a seemingly random piece. In fact, through small variations in the way the halves are placed together during the tearing, a predicted target-piece is positioned at the named number.*

"The Core" applies the same idea (in reverse) to a deck of cards: By slight variations during a seemingly regular elimination process, any one of the fifty-two cards can be made to remain at the end.

As a bonus, your spectators learn how to peel a deck.

EFFECT

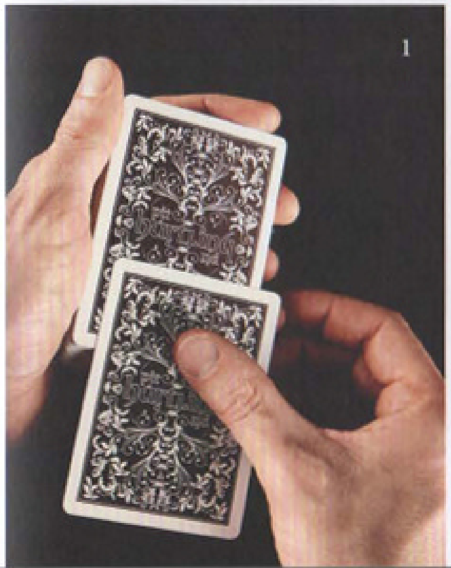
In a rare instance of a theological-biological card trick, a spectator takes a fantasy-trip to the performer's personal Garden of Eden: Learning that a deck of cards is very much like a piece of fruit, the spectator is asked to peel an imaginary deck and to name which card he finds to be the "core" of that deck.

A regular deck that has been sitting untouched on the table the whole time is slowly and carefully "peeled" as well. Amazingly, it seems to be the deck from the spectator's imaginary journey: The card at the very centre – the core of the deck – is exactly the named card.

METHOD OVERVIEW

The "peeling" of the deck is nothing but a series of reverse faros: Every other card is outjogged and stripped from the deck. This is repeated until only a single card remains. The process is quite honest and regular, however, each peeling-round can be started by either injogging or outjogging the first card (Photos 1 and 2). By varying this single parameter, any one of the fifty-two cards can be made to remain at the end.

The procedure described uses some very basic binary mathematics. It was chosen for the explanation because it best illustrates the underlying principle. There is however, a way to think of this that does not require any binary and which you may find easier during actual performance. This "shortcut" is found in the comments under the heading *"another way"*.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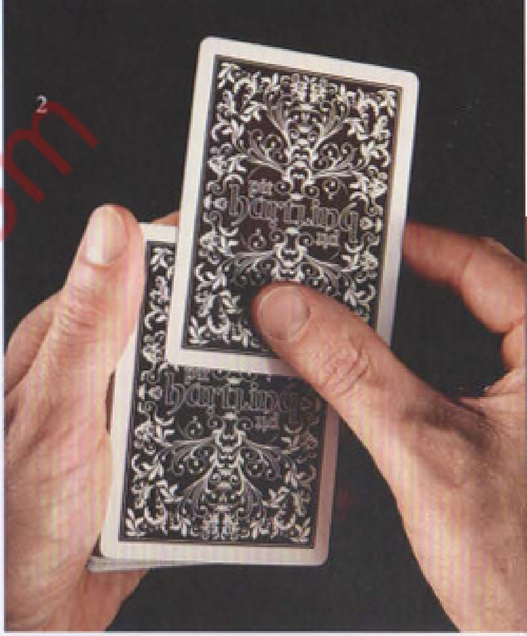
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PERFORMANCE

Place a deck in memorized order on the table and address a male spectator: *"Have you ever seen a theological-biological card trick? No? Well, imagine you are in a beautiful garden. In fact, not just any garden, but the Garden of Eden – paradise! Can you imagine that? Good. You'd be naked, of course, but don't let this distract you. In the middle of the garden you come to a big tree, the tree of temptation! And hanging from the tree are dozens of ripe decks of cards. Hey, it's* my *paradise! Now, imagine you pick a deck off the tree and peel it to see which card is the core of that deck. The card at the very centre of a deck is the core, you see. Every deck has a different core. Which card is the core in your imaginary deck?"*

The spectator names a card. Subtract one from its position in the deck and remember the result as your key number. (Suppose the

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[1] This routine was first published by Supreme Magic as *The Koran Newspaper Prediction* (De Courcy, ca. 1970), and later as "Headline Countdown" in *Al Koran's Legacy* (Miller, 1972), page 53. It is a streamlined handling of Edmund Rowland's "An Impromptu Torn Newspaper Test" from *Pentagram*, Nov. 1952, page 11.

spectator names the card with stack number 20. You subtract one and remember key number nineteen.)[2]

You will now "peel" the deck: Every other card is outjogged and then the outer half of the deck is removed. This is repeated several times until only one card remains. Each of those peeling-rounds has a value: The first round has the value one. The second round has the value two. The third round has the value four. The next eight, then sixteen, and the last round has the value thirty-two. (Note that these numbers simply double from one round to the next.)

Also, while the peeling itself is always quite regular, there is a secret variation at the beginning of each round: Each round can be started either by outjogging or injogging the first card. (If treated matter-of-factly, this goes completely unnoticed.) To know whether to start each round with an injog or an outjog, consider which of the round-values (one, two, four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two) is needed to total the key number.

In our example the key number is nineteen, so the needed numbers are sixteen, two and one (16 + 2 + 1 = 19).[3]

The simple rule for each round then, is this: If the value of a round is needed, the first card of that round is outjogged. If the value of the round is not needed, the first card is injogged.

Let's play that through with our example:

The spectator named card number 20. Subtracting one gives nineteen. To make nineteen, the required round-values are one, two and sixteen.

The first round has the value of one. This number we need, so the first card is outjogged (and then every other card, till the end). As always, the outer half is stripped from the deck and placed aside.

The second round has the value two. This number is also needed, so again, the first card is outjogged.

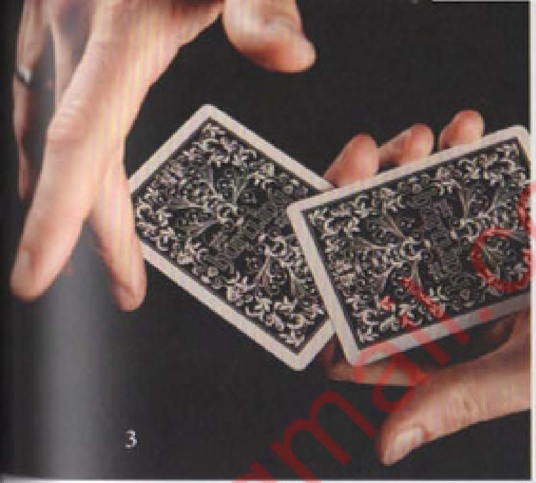
The next round has the value four. This number is not needed, so this time, start by injogging the first card (and then, as always, every other card till the end).

The next round's value is eight. This is, again, not needed, so inward the first card goes. (After stripping out the outer cards, only four cards are left.)

The next round has the value of sixteen, which is needed. Therefore, the first card is outjogged, as is the third. Both outer cards are stripped out. Only two cards are left.

The last round has the value thirty-two, which is not needed. So, the first card is injogged (and the second card outjogged, sort of). The outer card is removed (to keep everything clear and consistent, use a sideways "stripping-out" movement, even though there is nothing left to strip the card out from (Photo 3)).

The first time you do this you may surprise yourself, but the remaining card will always be the one the spectator named (in this example, stack number 20). Turn the card face up to show that you have been peeling the very deck from the spectator's imagination!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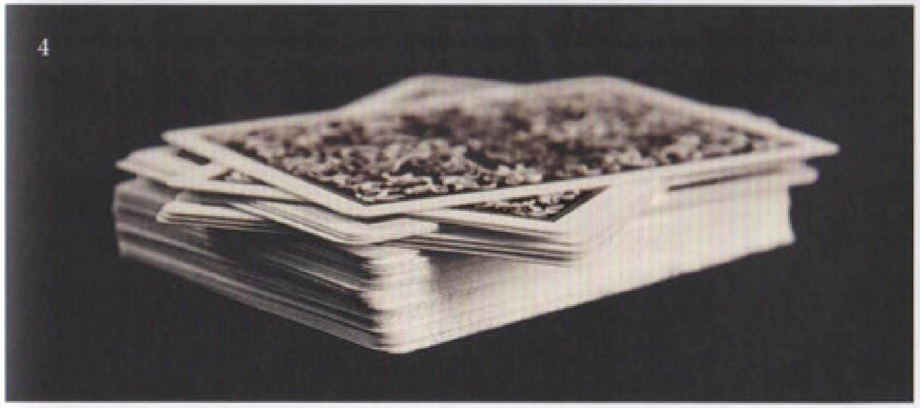
RETURNING HOME

As you have seen, during the trick, the discarded groups are placed onto the table one on top of the other, forming a pile. What has not been mentioned yet, is this: Starting with the third packet (round three), each packet is placed on top of the previous ones at an angle (Photo 4). After the trick, this will make it an easy matter to pick up the same packets again, separately.[4]

To bring everything back in order you basically do the whole trick backwards: One by one you pick up the packets from the top of the discard pile and alternate them again with the cards in your hands. There is no need to remember any in-out sequence, the packets are simply always interlaced together such that the card with the highest stack number ends on the face of the combined packet.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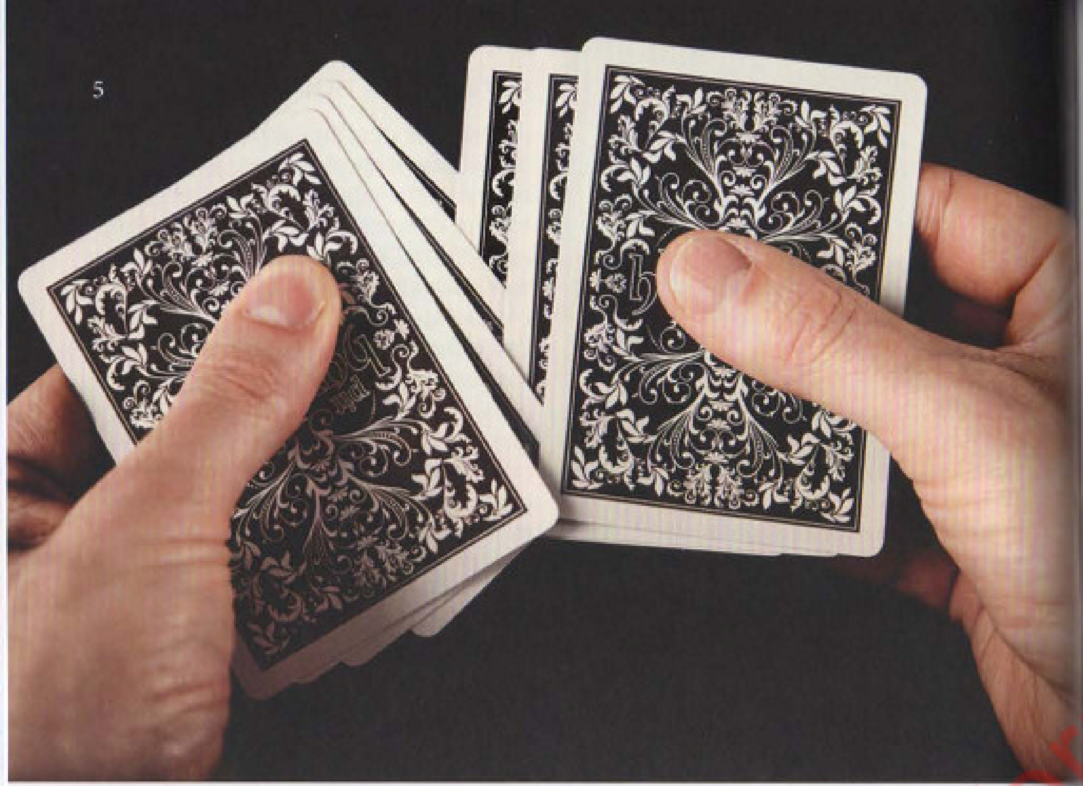
[2] As has been pointed out by Doug Canning (see *Semi-Automatic Card Tricks, Volume VII* (Beam, 2006), page 168), instead of subtracting one from the card's stack number, you can also place the bottom card of the stack to the top before the beginning of the trick. In that case, the key number is simply the card's stack number.

[3] When figuring out which of the numbers are needed to make the key number, it is easiest to look at them from the largest to the smallest. With just a little practice this will become quite easy. To orient myself, I found it helpful to remember the two "landmarks" 16 + 8 = 24 and 32 + 8 = 40.

[4] I realize now it is too late to mention that, but I did not want to confuse you at the time. Sorry. I suggest you put your deck back in memorized order and do the trick again, this time placing the packets at an angle as mentioned. That's ok, I'll wait.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Let's play this through: At the end of the effect you hold the named card in your hand (stack number 20, in our example). The first "packet" you take from the top of the deck is only one card (the last card that was eliminated). Take it and place it on top or below the card in your hand, wherever it belongs in memorized order. In our example this card is number 52 so it is placed under the card in your hand.

Take the next packet from the deck (two cards, in our example). Alternate those two with the two in your hand such that the highest stack number ends up on the face (you simply restore memorized order, so this is entirely intuitive).

Simply continue like this, always picking up the next packet from the top of the deck and alternating it with the cards in your hands. When the packets become bigger, you may want to spread the cards slightly in opposite directions and interlace them one by one at the corners (Photo 5).

After having added and interlaced the fourth packet, you will hold thirteen cards in your hand. Place those on top of the rest of the deck, stepped a bit towards the left (Photo 6). Everything up to here takes about twenty seconds and should be done in the offbeat and the reaction after the effect. At this point, talk a bit and let some time pass.

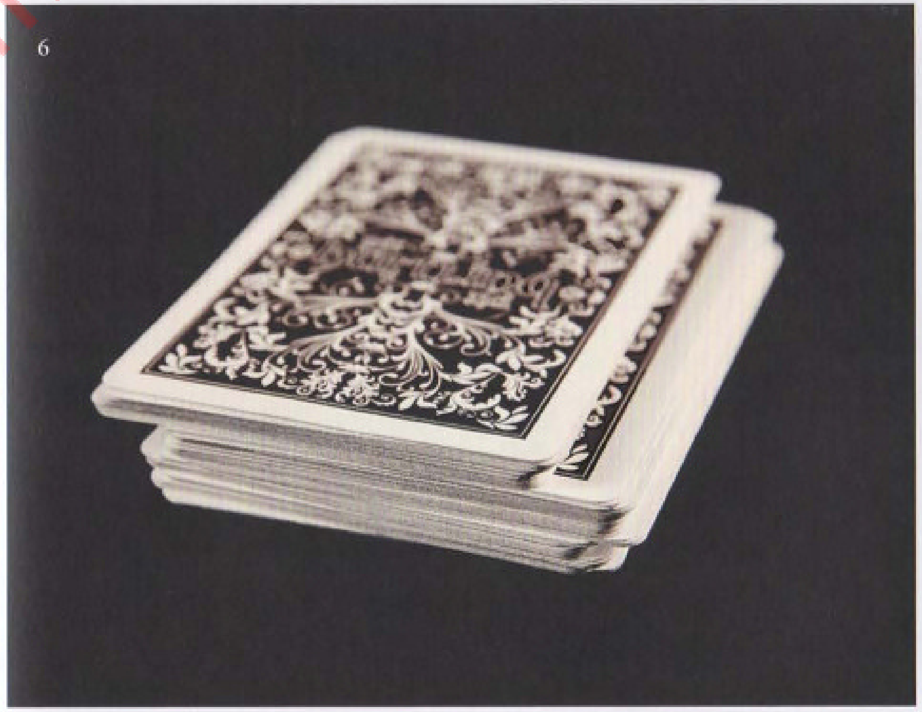
Eventually, pick up the deck and place it into left-hand dealing position, converting the step to a break. As you introduce the next effect, cut to the break and faro shuffle the small packet into the rest of the deck (a look at the face cards of the packets will tell you whether to use an in- or out-faro). Follow by giving the whole deck another faro shuffle, either in or out as required, to restore the order.

COMMENTS

While such nomenclature was largely avoided in the description itself, you will have seen how "The Core" makes use of reverse faros and binary mathematics. In summary, the working can be described like this: Any card's position minus one, expressed in binary, gives the sequence of in- and out- reverse faros needed to make that card remain at the end.

Another way

While I hope it has been useful to understand the underlying principle, as promised, here is another way to think of this, which you may find much easier: Simply take the stack number of the named card (without subtracting one) and see whether it is odd or even. If even, outjog the first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card, if odd injog the first card.[5] For each new next round, divide the number by two (when odd, round up) and repeat. With this process, instead of doing all the calculations at the beginning, you go from round to round and follow the position of the card in real-time, so to speak.

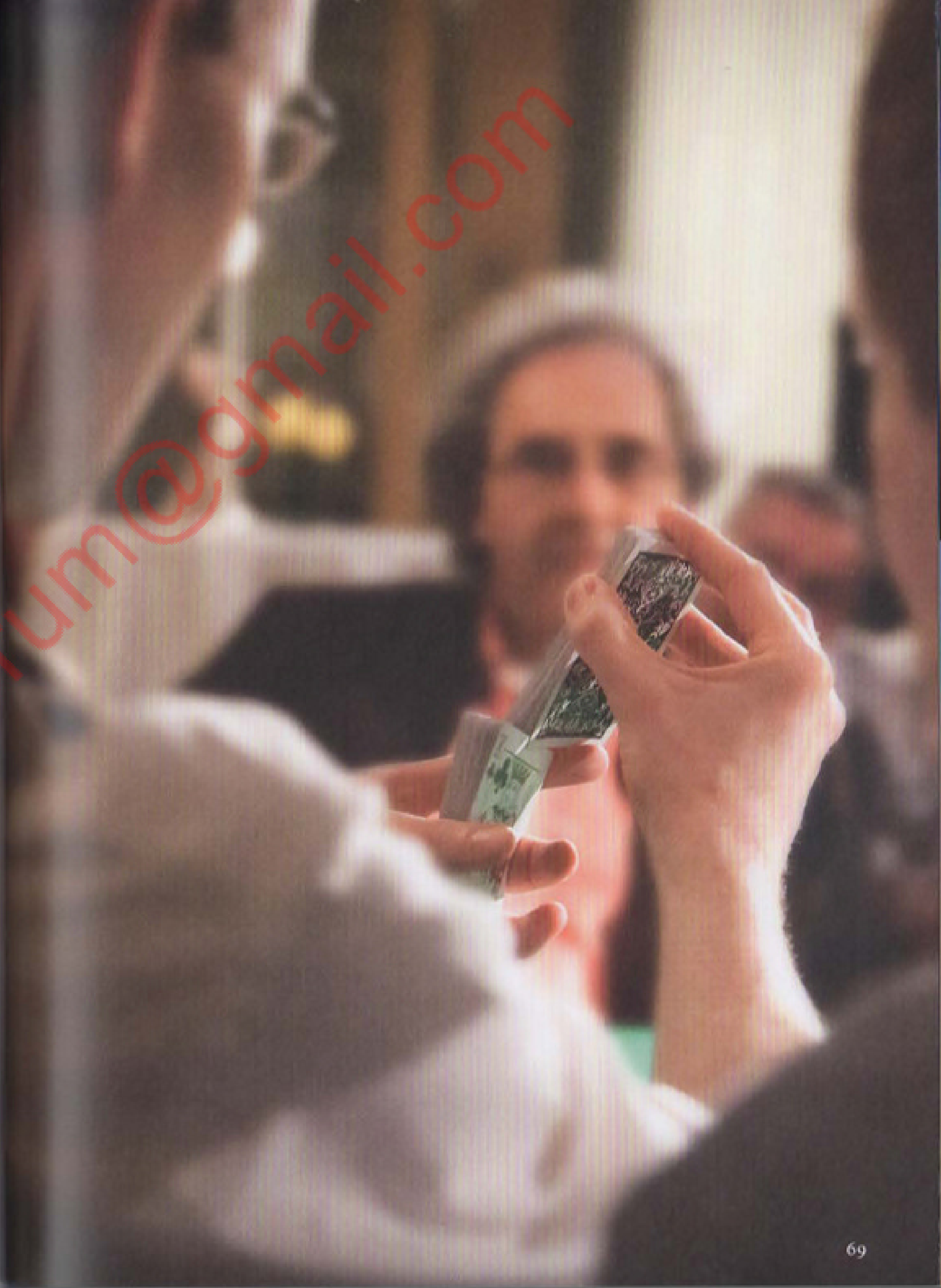
Whichever mental approach you chose, the strength of the method is that it is counter-intuitive: Because the elimination procedure appears completely regular, the last card seems to be predetermined – it appears to come from a fixed spot.

The presentation is designed to emphasize this: The deck is likened to a piece of fruit whose core is *"the card at the very centre"*, and to get to it everything else must be *"peeled"* away. At the same time, the plot motivates the multiple reverse faros and helps making an otherwise potentially tedious procedure entertaining.[6]

To take full advantage of the method it is important not to move too fast during the elimination-rounds. In fact, already when picking up the deck from the table, your handling should make clear that you are not changing the position of any card: No shuffling, no cutting – nothing. The last thing you want your spectators to think is that you somehow sneaked their card to the right spot.

A number of remarkable variants and additional ideas for this effect by Doug Canning can be found in the wonderful *Semi-Automatic Card Tricks* series, specifically, *Vol. VII* (Steve Beam, 2006) page 169. See also David Solomon's trick "Sorting The Deck" in Vol. VIII of the same series (Steve Beam, 2010) page 282.

Finally, let me draw your attention to the gem of an article that is Alex Elmsley's "The Mathematics of the Weave Shuffle".[7] As Denis Behr rightfully pointed out, "The Core" is basically Elmsley's first "Binary Translocation" done backwards. Elmsley's writings on the subject are a veritable treasure trove of ideas, and the ever brilliant Stephen Minch gives several additional sources that should keep you busy for a while.



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[5] The injog pushes the card towards you, of course, so an easy mnemonic is to think to yourself: "I am odd." (And because you are reading this book, I suspect, this is probably true.)

[6] Another image to mention during the first (longest) reverse faro is the many skins of an onion and talking about *"always removing the outer skin"* just as the outer half of the deck is stripped away.

[7] Originally published in three consecutive issues of the 1957 *Pentragram* it can also be found in Stephen Minch's amazing *The Collected Works of Alex Elmsley, volume II* (Minch, 1994) on page 302.

Thought Exchange

Thought Exchange

In Al Koran's fantastic "Double Thought" from Professional Presentations[1]*, the performer and a spectator find each other's selected cards. In typical bold and efficient fashion, Koran uses a marked deck to achieve the effect. "Thought Exchange" replaces marks with a memorized deck.*[2]

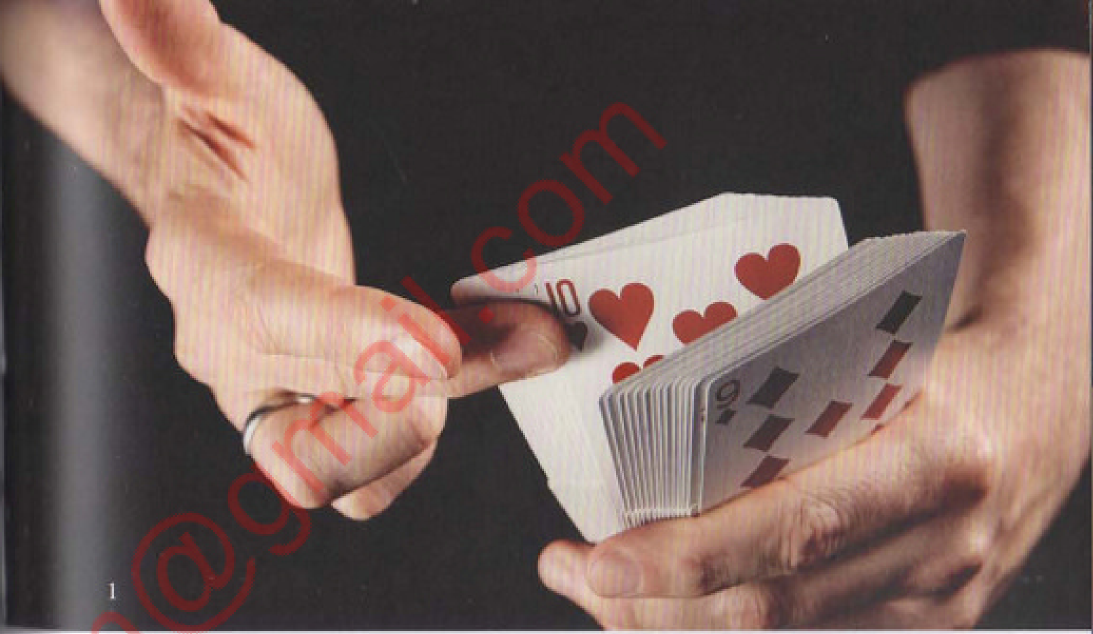
Like Al Koran's original, this handling is designed for close-up. For yet another version of the same effect that is suited for parlour situations see "Just Like That" elsewhere in this book.

EFFECT

The performer and a spectator each have a card in mind. Not only does the performer find the spectator's card, the spectator also finds the performer's card!

METHOD OVERVIEW

The performer secretly learns the selected card's position and locates it by counting to it in a face-down spread. Conversely, when the spectator "finds" a card, the performer learns this card's identity from its position in the spread and names it as his selection.



1

PERFORMANCE

"People constantly ask me how things are done, but when I explain, they don't believe me!" After this lament, you offer an example: *"Take the trick where you find a card that someone is thinking of. That one is actually quite straightforward: You just go through the deck, and when a card feels right, that's the one!"*

When this explanation is yet again met only with laughter and mockery, drastic measures are adopted: You make a spectator try for herself – not only will you find her card, but she will also find yours! This way, at least one person is bound to believe you!

After this introduction, give the deck a few short false shuffles. (This trick actually needs only half a memorized deck; see the comments.) Eventually execute an out faro without squaring up: The first half of the deck (stack numbers 1 to 26) is held in left-hand dealing position, with the other half sticking out for about three quarters of its length.

Looking away to the left, riffle the cards off with your right second finger and have a spectator on your right call out stop at any point (Photo 1). When she stops you, let the deck open along the right side, and as she looks at the card, take a left fourth-finger break in the lower half of the deck in standard incomplete faro-peek manner.[3]

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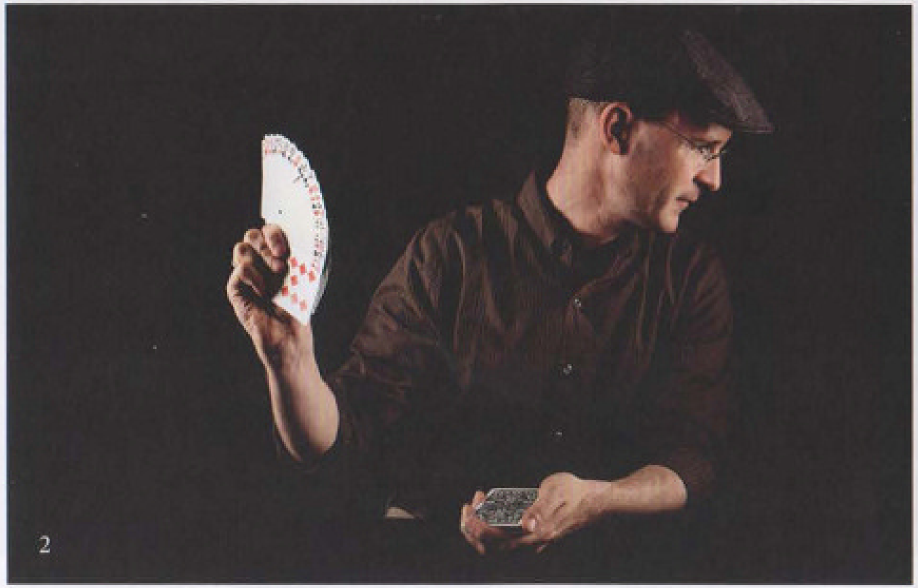
[1] *Al Koran's Professional Presentations* (Koran, Miller, 1967), page 89.

[2] Another one to have replaced a marked deck with a memorized deck to perform Koran's trick is Allan Ackerman; see his "An Ungaffed Ted" in *Classic Handlings* (Ackerman, 1999), page 21.

[3] "The Incomplete Faro", *Faro Controlled Miracles* (Marlo, 1964), page 5.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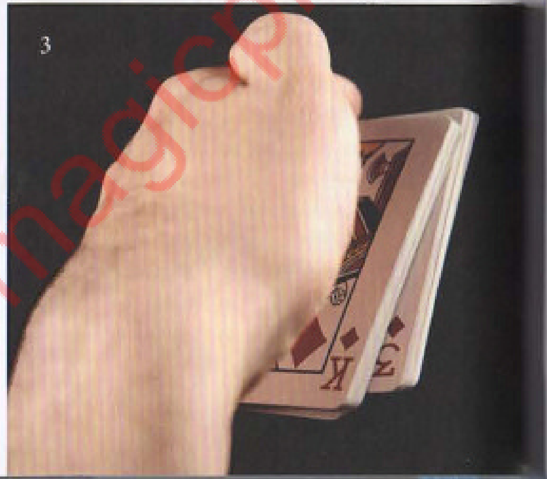
When she has remembered the card let the rest of the cards riffle off and then strip out the outer packet still holding the break in the lower half. Open the stripped-out packet into a one-handed fan and with your head still turned away show the cards to the spectator, asking her to *"concentrate and think of the card."* This position is held for a moment (Photo 2). She already has a card in mind, of course, but the image might later cause some to misremember that she merely thought of any card by looking at a fan. Close the fan and place the packet onto the table in front of her.

Turn your own half face-up, converting the break into a step in the process, which allows you to glimpse the card above it (Photo 3, exposed view). Remember that card. Immediately spread the packet with the faces towards you and look them over for a moment, pretending to think of a card from this half yourself.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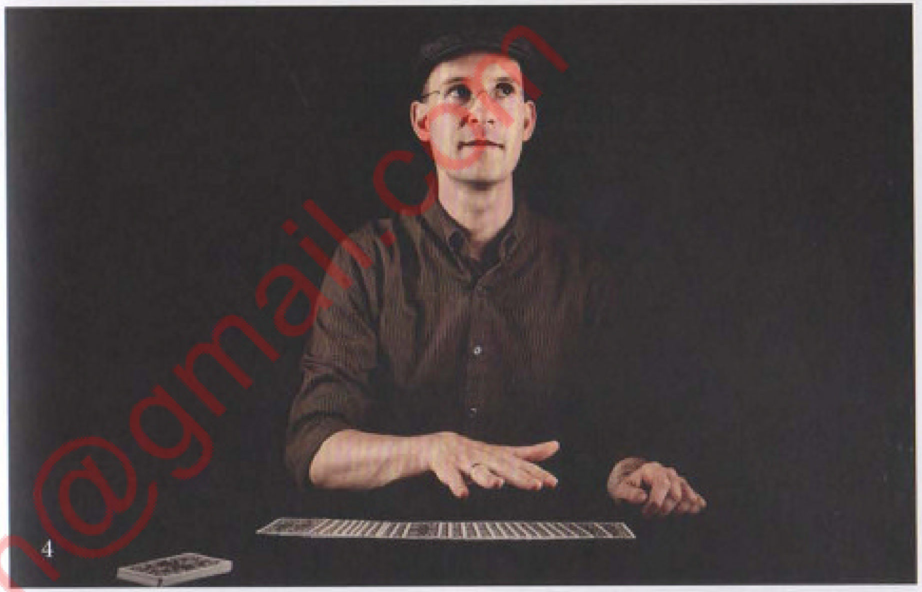
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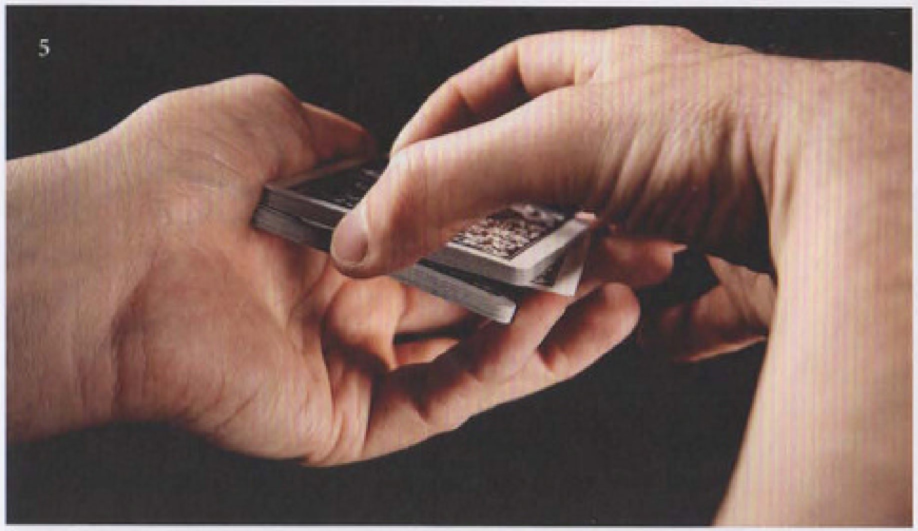
Close your packet, place it down in front of you and recap: *"So, you are thinking of a card, and I am thinking of a card. Now, I will find your card…"* Pick up her packet and place it into your left hand, *"…and you will find mine."* Place your packet in front of her. *"I'll go first."*

Give the packet in your hands a brief false shuffle and then spread the cards face down on the table from left to right. Recall the card you glimpsed. That card's stack number is the position of her selected card from the top (right end) of the spread. Openly tap the spread here and there moving from right to left as if to adjust the cards a bit and distribute everything nicely. In fact, however, use this casual touching at intervals of two or three cards to secretly count to the selection. When you arrive at the card move it or the card above it a little askew to mark the spot before continuing along towards the left.

With all seemingly prepared to your satisfaction, the demonstration begins: Ask the spectator to think of her card and slowly move your hand back and forth over the spread, tentatively touching a few cards at various spots. This time, however, do not look at the cards, but rather appear to try to "sense" the card she is thinking of (Photo 4). (First momentarily marking the spot and then officially doing it all without looking helps to dispel any notion of counting. It also leaves them with the memorable image of you feeling for her card blind.) At some point, with your hand over the right spot, appear to sense something. Look down and decisively push the card in question out of the spread.

Leave the spread and the isolated card where they are and tell your spectator: *"Now it's your turn."* Pick up the packet in front of her and give it a brief false shuffle. Swing cut about half the packet into your



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left hand, and when placing the rest on top to complete the cut, use the left fourth finger to push the card above it (stack number 26) diagonally to the right, forming a small anglejog (Photo 5). In a brief gesture, tilt the packet a bit to glimpse the bottom card and remember it.

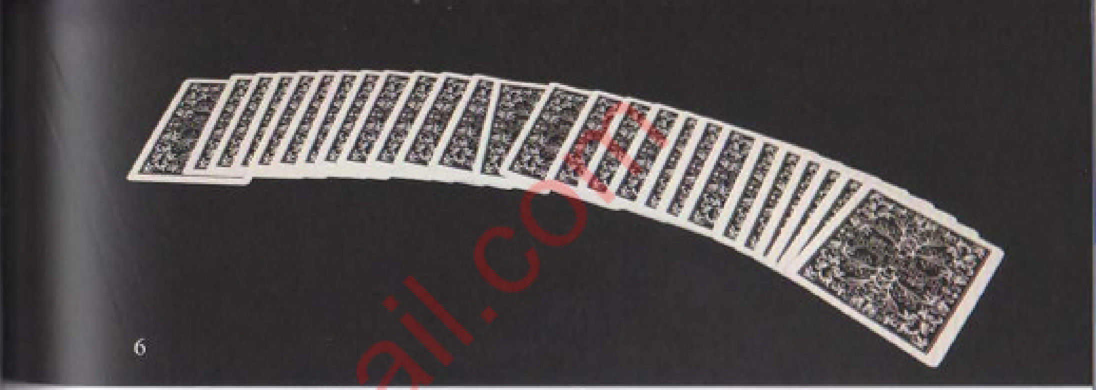
Spread the packet face down in front of the spectator. To you, the jogged card will stand out clearly, but unless FOX TV has recently aired a Masked Magician Anglejog-Special, no one else will be any the wiser (Photo 6).

Concentrate on your thought-of card (?)[4] and invite the spectator to run her hand back and fourth over the spread just like you did. Eventually, she is to slide out the card she feels is yours. When she does, you can easily tell what the card is by its position in the spread:

The jogged card itself is stack number 26. If she picks a card from the right of the jog see how many cards away it is and subtract that from twenty-six. (Two cards away is stack number 24. Five cards away is stack number 21, and so on.)

If she picks a card from the left of the jog there is nothing to calculate: The distance from the jog is simply the card's stack number. (Three cards from the jog is stack number 3. Six cards from the jog is stack number 6, etc.)

Finally, if the spectator picks a card near the top or bottom of the spread, simply count from the end. As you know the bottom card, you can easily tell cards from both



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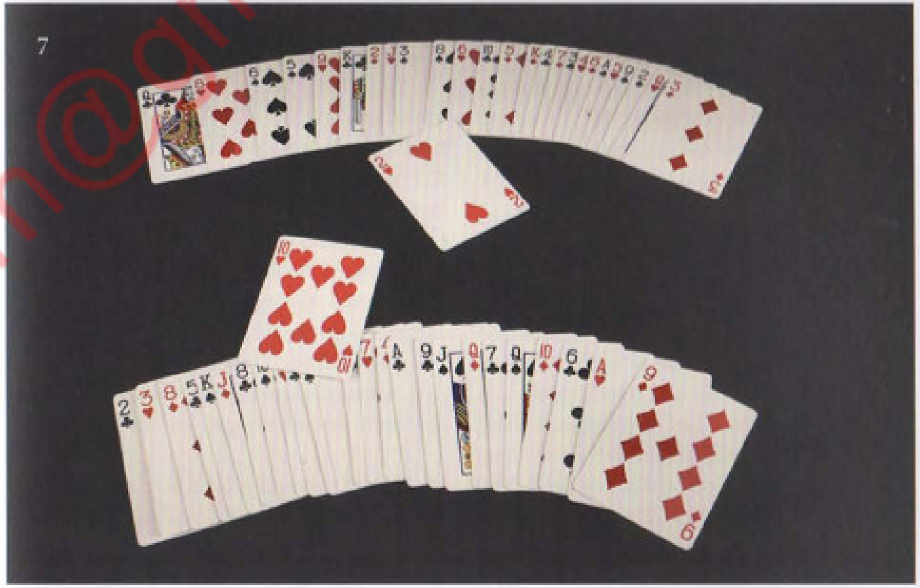

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ends as well. A few tries will make all of this clear.

As soon as she has pushed a card from the spread (the Two of Hearts, say), matter-of-factly state: *"I thought of the Two of Hearts. Which card did you think of?"* She will name her card (the Ten of Hearts for example) and you repeat both of them: *"The Two of Hearts and the Ten of Hearts."* Very clearly pick up the two cards, one in each hand and after a short pause turn them over together: *"The Two of Hearts and the Ten of Hearts!"* During the reaction, pick up the two spreads from the table and re-spread them face up. This displays all the different cards, visually driving home the improbability of the effect (Photo 7).

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[4] At this point, incidentally, you may want to pretend to have forgotten your card for a second, before it comes back to mind. If this appears an honest mistake, it implies that you are really thinking of a specific card, when, of course, you are not. It may be gilding the lily, but I feel it is a nice little convincer.

After the reaction has died down you may want to refer back to the introduction and in a short epilogue coax the spectator: "*Now, what will you say when they ask you how it's done? You just take a card and that's the one, right!?*" And then, to the audience at large: "*See, I told you!*" This gets a laugh, nicely wraps up everything and covers the few moments it takes to put the deck together again.

RETURNING HOME

Cut the packet that was spread in front the spectator to bring stack number 1 back to the top, put the two halves together and replace the selected cards at their positions. Everything is back in memorized order.

COMMENTS

The incomplete faro peek, while an all-but-unfathomable way of learning the selected card's position in the spectator's packet, is not the most natural of procedures, from a layperson's perspective. The goal, thus, is to make the handling "disappear": Ideally, when talking about this piece, people should only ever remember "thought-of" cards.

In addition to doing the actual peek itself rather quickly and casually, here's another hint towards the same end: If people have seen you do faro shuffles before and are already used to the handling, it will draw less attention. So, especially if doing "Thought Exchange" early in a performance you may want to include in the initial short series of false shuffles at least one faro-style shuffle (simply shuffling a packet anywhere into the rest, springing everything together at an angle and following with a secret strip-out). Going into the incomplete faro position then seems just like the beginning of another such shuffle, which you just happen to spontaneously (?) interrupt midway to have a card selected.

Another approach is to start with the deck one or two faros away from memorized order and doing that number of shuffles to bring the deck into order at the beginning of the trick.

Handling with half a memorized deck

"Thought Exchange" can be done exactly as described with only the top half of the deck (stack numbers 1 to 26) in order and the bottom half freely shuffled. Not only does this allow for some very convincing shuffling before the trick, but also during the effect. Let's enter the action when you have just taken the spectator's packet, ready to spread it face down and feel for her card:

Instead of false shuffling her packet as described, give it a real shuffle, keeping her selection in place as follows: Suppose her card is tenth from the top. Start overhand shuffling the packet normally, but when you get near the tenth card, run a few cards one by one. When you are sure you have safely passed the tenth card, shuffle off normally. The selection is now tenth from the bottom.[5]

You could now spread the packet on the table and count ten cards from the bottom, but as I find it easier to count from the top, I simply repeat the shuffle (this time running single cards around the tenth from the bottom) to bring the card back to its original position. From here, continue as described.

To laypeople this will not make much of a difference, but as those shuffles are seen to really mix the packet (they are basically real shuffles, after all) this handling can come in handy to baffle more knowledgeable audiences.

Finally, for quite different solutions to the same plot see the already mentioned "Just Like That" (page 112 in this book) and "Double Thought" from Christoph Borer's book *Der Stoff aus dem die Wunder sind*[6]. (This last one has the unique feature that you can show your own selection to the audience, and later the spectator will actually find that same card!)

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[5] According to Marlo in *Estimation* (Marlo, 1962), page 32, this handling is Laurie Irleand's.

[6] "Double Thought", *Der Stoff aus dem die Wunder sind* (Borer, 1991), page 18.

Duplicity

Duplicity

One day it occurred to me that dealing cards from either the top or the bottom can be used to reproduce a spectator's riffle shuffle.

"Duplicity" uses this concept to achieve a demonstration of card control that can be appreciated even by people who have never played cards in their lives.

EFFECT

A spectator gives a deck a shuffle and deals out two hands of Poker. The hands are shown and one of them is chosen. The performer announces he will try to control these exact five cards in a second deck. He shuffles and cuts his deck and deals two hands as well. One hand is shown, and indeed, the performer has managed to duplicate the spectator's hand: His hand contains exactly the same five cards.

Apologizing that his cards did not come out in the same order as in the spectator's hand, the performer adds: *"I did not have the time to put the cards in order, because I was busy doing that in the other hand!"* He shows his second hand, and it turns out to be an exact copy of the spectator's other hand; this time with the cards even in the same order!

METHOD OVERVIEW

Both decks are in memorized order. The spectator gives his deck a (riffle) shuffle and a few cuts and deals two hands of Poker, which are shown face up. The performer brings his deck to such a position that the two hands can be copied by dealing cards either from the top or bottom, depending on the spectator's shuffle.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE

To illustrate the basic principle, try this: Remove all the Hearts and Clubs from the deck and put each suit in order from the Ace on the back to the King on the face.

Give the Clubs a riffle shuffle as follows: With the packet face down, cut off the top seven cards and riffle shuffle them together with the remaining six. Spread the shuffled packet face up. (Note the two chains: The Ace to Seven are in order, randomly disrupted by the Eight through King, also in order.)

Hold the Hearts face down in position for an overhand shuffle and run the top seven cards, throwing the rest on top. (After this the top card of the packet will be the Eight and the card on the face will be the Ace.)

You can now deal the Hearts into a row (turning each card face up) and duplicate the order of the Clubs by using top or bottom deals according to the two chains in the spread: When a card in the spread is one from Eight to King, deal from the top, for a card from Ace to Seven deal from the bottom. In other words you reproduce the riffle shuffle by dealing each card either from the top (for the cards of one chain) or from bottom (for the cards of the other chain).

With this in mind, let's look at "Duplicity" as "An exercise in card control":

PERFORMANCE

Hand a memorized deck to a spectator and have him riffle shuffle the cards once and give them one or several straight cuts.[1] He then deals two hands of Poker, face down and places the deck aside. Turn the two packets face up. Suppose they look like this (Photo 1, actual cards are replaced with stack numbers):

The card on the face of the first packet (stack number 9 in our example) is the starting point of one of the chains. Always start by cutting this card to the top in your deck.

Next, we will find the starting point of the second chain. The cards have been dealt alternatingly into two packets. Therefore, to follow the original sequence you mentally go back and forth between the two: Look at the first card from the face in the left packet, then the first card from the face in the right packet. Next, the second card from the face in the left packet and the second

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[1] For some hints on how to handle this, see "Sherlock" on page 40 in this book.

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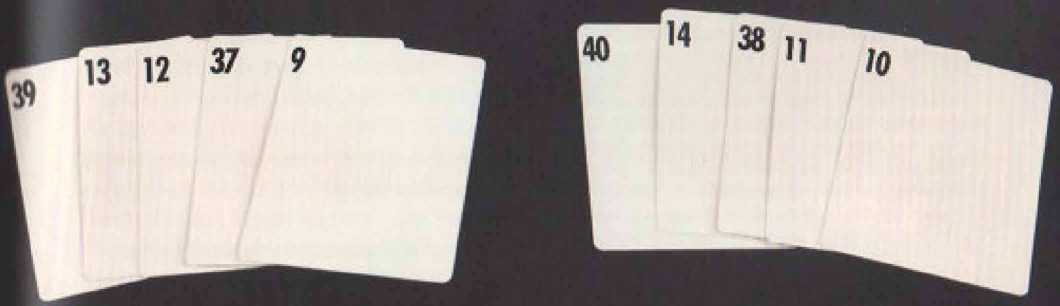
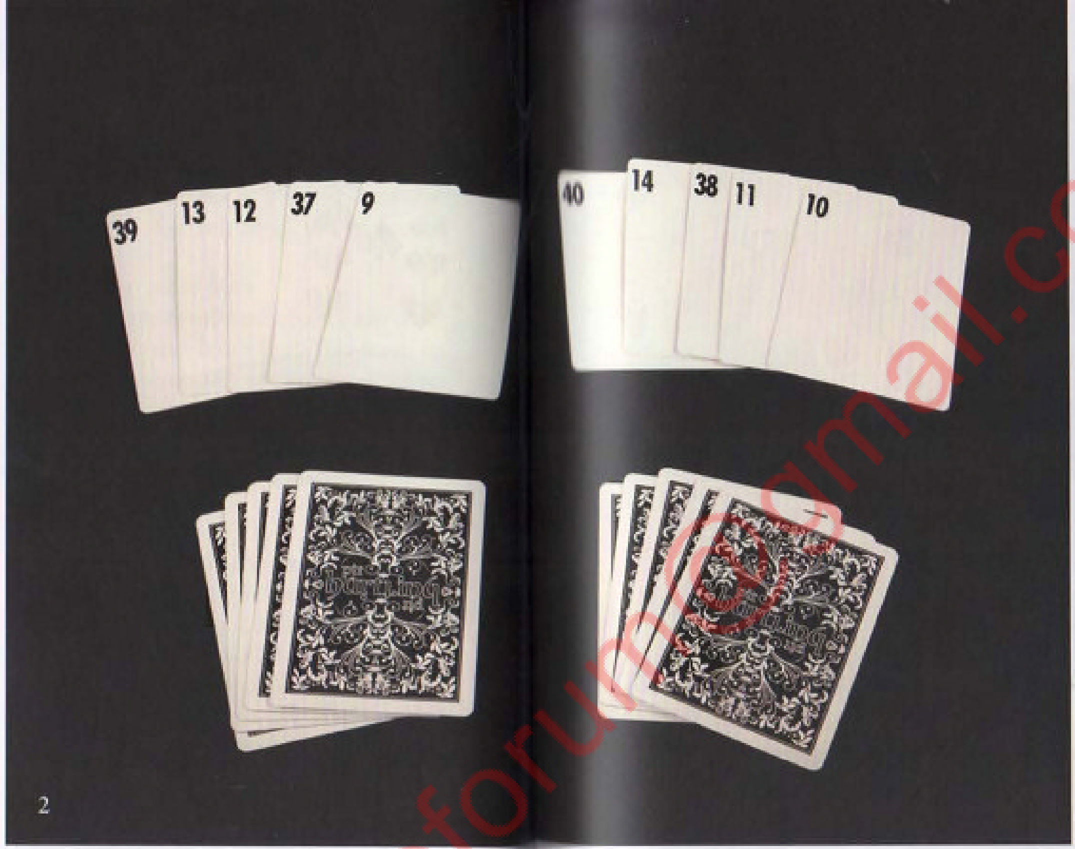


card from the face in the right packet. The third card from the face in the left packet and so on, always alternating between the two packets. In our example the sequence goes: 9, 10, 37, 11, 12, 38, 13, 14, 39, 40. (Make sure to follow this in the photo.)

Look for the first "jump" or "gap" in the sequence. In our example, this occurs after stack number 10.[2] The card after that first gap (stack number 37 in our example) is the starting point of the second chain. Locate this card in your deck (it will typically be near the centre) and take a break above it.

Regrip the deck in the right hand in position for an overhand shuffle (the right thumb retains the break). In the first shuffling motion, take the packet above the break into the left hand. Then run one card onto the left-hand half, injogging it, and follow it with nine more for a total of ten cards before throwing the rest on top. Finally, give the deck a complete cut below the injog.



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While these actions hardly need cover, in the meantime you can have a spectator select one of his two hands and explain that you will try to locate those exact five cards in your deck. Whichever hand he chooses, look at the cards for a moment pretending to memorize them and then riffle through your deck, apparently looking for those cards and memorizing their positions. Take a while to give your deck a series of false shuffles, seemingly locating the necessary cards. Finally, hold your deck face down, ready for bottom deals.

You will deal two hands of Poker, copying the spectator's deal:

Follow the sequence by mentally alternating back and forth between the two hands as explained. For each card note whether it is from one chain or from the other and deal from the top or the bottom accordingly. While this is easy in principle, trying to follow both chains at the same time can quickly become confusing. Instead, try this: Mentally follow one chain only (the one you deal from the top, say) and think of the other cards as discards (which you deal from the bottom). Yet another way to think during the deal is this: Every time the sequence switches to the other chain, you also switch the deal (from top to bottom or vice versa). Giving this the necessary practice will soon tell which approach works best for you.

To clarify the process let's take our example and go through the deal card for card (you may want to follow this in the Photo again):

For the first card, look on the face of the first packet (stack number 9 in our example). This comes from the top. (The first card is actually easy: It always comes from the top.) For the next card, look at the first in the right packet (stack number 10 in the example). It is from the same chain, so that comes from the top as well. The next card in the sequence (the second in the left packet) is from a whole different area of the deck (stack number 37). It comes from the other chain, so this time, you deal from the bottom. The next card (the second in the right packet) is stack number 11. This comes from the top again. The next is number 12, so again from the top. 38 is from the other chain again, so you deal from the bottom. 13 is dealt from the top, as is 14. The next is 39, from the bottom, followed, by 40, from the bottom as well.

Your two Poker hands are dealt face down below the spectator's face-up packets (Photo 2). As you deal, apparently focus only on the packet below the one the spectator selected; the other packet should seem completely incidental.

The deal completed, pick up the "important" packet and hold it with the faces towards yourself. Your cards will be in the same order as in the spectator's packet, but you want to pretend they are not. To do that, rearrange the cards a bit, apparently trying to match the order in the spectator's packet, before deciding it is quicker to simply pull the cards out of the spread in

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[2] Depending on the spectator's shuffle, the first jump in the sequence can occur after the first card, before the last, or anywhere in between. With a very "bad" riffle shuffle (very big groups of cards), there might even not be any such jump at all: Theoretically, all ten cards in the two hands could come from the same chain. This case would save you all work: Simply deal two hands from the top and you have duplicated the spectator's hands. (In this case, you could even let a spectator do the dealing himself.) So far, this has never happened to me, it is just mentioned as a possibility so you know what to do should it ever occur.

3

the correct order. Place them onto the table one by one, duplicating the selected packet (Photo 3).

Proudly show that you have managed to locate and stack the exact five cards that the spectator randomly dealt from a shuffled deck.

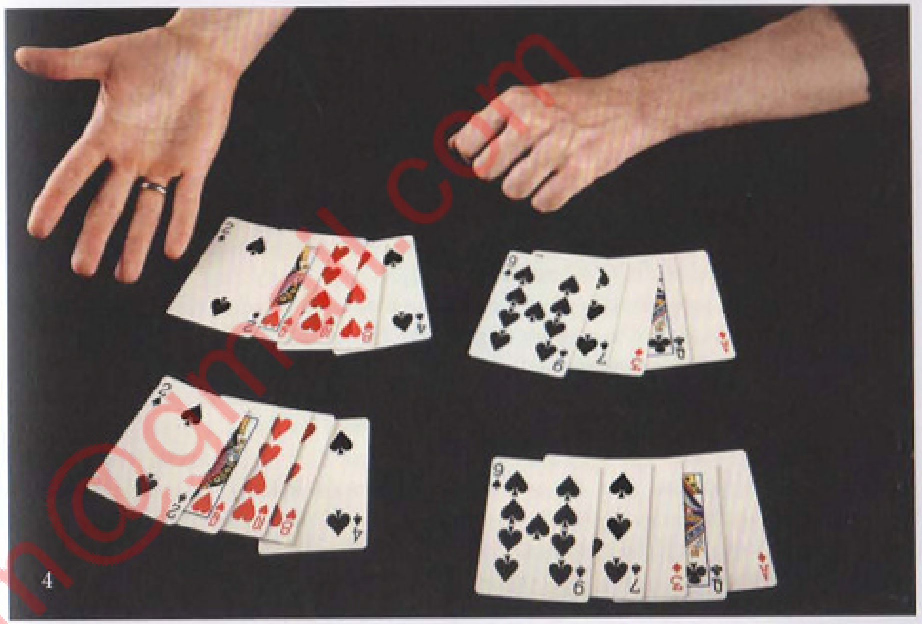
After a suitable pause add: *"I must apologize that my cards were not in the same order as yours. I really didn't have the time to arrange them. You see, I was busy doing that with the other packet!"* Turn over your other packet to show that not only did you apparently cull and stack the spectator's second packet as well, you even found the time to put them in the right order (Photo 4)!

RETURNING HOME

While it will usually be enough to bring only one of the decks back into memorized order and have the other one freely shuffled, for the sake of completeness, here are restacking procedures for both decks:

Your deck
Take your deck in face-up dealing position. Pick up your ten cards from the table in any order and hold them spread in your right hand.

Starting with the card on the face of the deck, count backwards and pull the cards with the corresponding stack numbers onto the deck with your left thumb (Photo 5). When all the cards of that group are gone, hold a break at that spot and continue pulling cards from the fan, this time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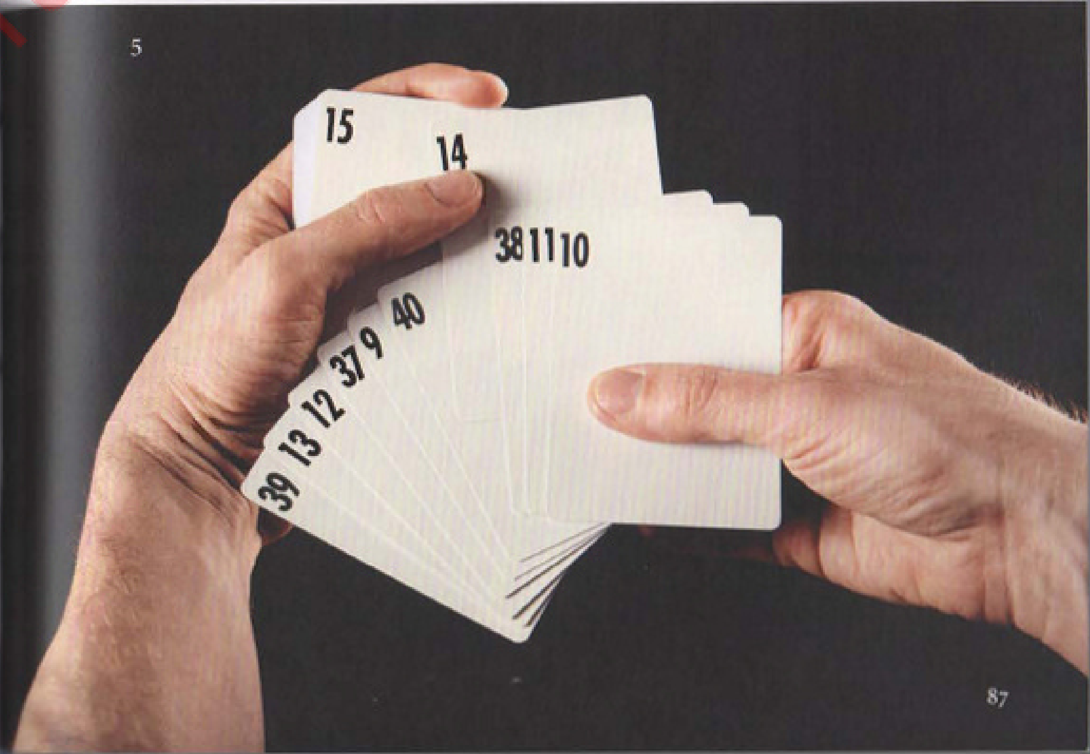

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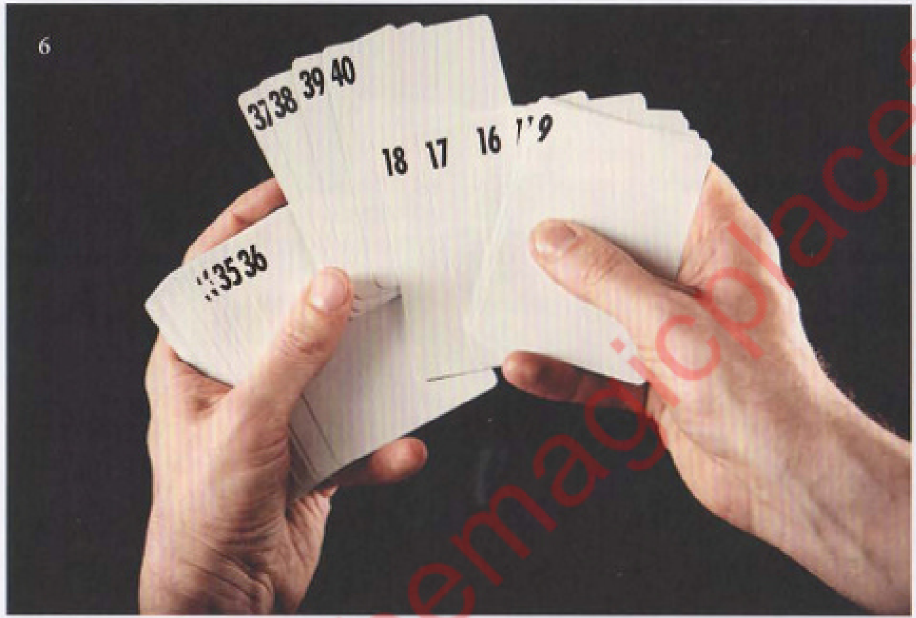
arranging the remaining cards in increasing order (from lowest stack number on the back to highest on the face).

Hold that last group on the fingers of the right hand and spread the deck over it, the small packet riding under the spread. Insert the packet under the first ten cards from the face (this spot is easily identified by a big gap in the sequence so no counting is necessary (Photo 6, exposed view)).

With the packet back in position keep spreading until you come to the card with the stack number one less than the one on the face of the deck (you will find it close to the centre, Photo 7). Hold a break above that card. Take the cards above the break in the right hand and hold everything in position for a face-up overhand shuffle. Run ten cards from the face of the deck onto the left-hand half and throw the rest on top. The deck is back in memorized order. (Altogether, these actions take about twenty seconds.)

The spectator's deck

Take the spectator's first packet in your left and his second packet in your right hand, both in face-up dealing position. Thumb off the face cards of the packets so they drop onto the table together, letting the card from the left fall first so it becomes the bottom card of the pair. Quickly repeat this four times with the remaining cards, forming a face-up packet. Drop the combined packet on top of the deck. The result is a memorized deck that has been given one riffle shuffle.



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From here, you may either undo the riffle shuffle using a spread cull (or, if your next effect requires the deck in inverse order[3], Lennart Green's Angle Separation[4]), or go into "Sherlock" from this book (see page 40) to restore the order.

COMMENTS

Presented as described, "Duplicity" is an exhibition of skill: You demonstrate an especially difficult "etude" a gambler or magician might use to exercise his technique (in this case, locating ten random cards in the deck and stacking them for two players).

For laypeople the fascination comes from the apparent "look behind the scenes", the implied extreme difficulty and the (admittedly rather classic) dramatic structure: The performer does what he promised to do, and then tops it with a thematically fitting kicker. Also, the final image with the ten random cards and their duplicates from another deck visually "sells" the effect quite well.

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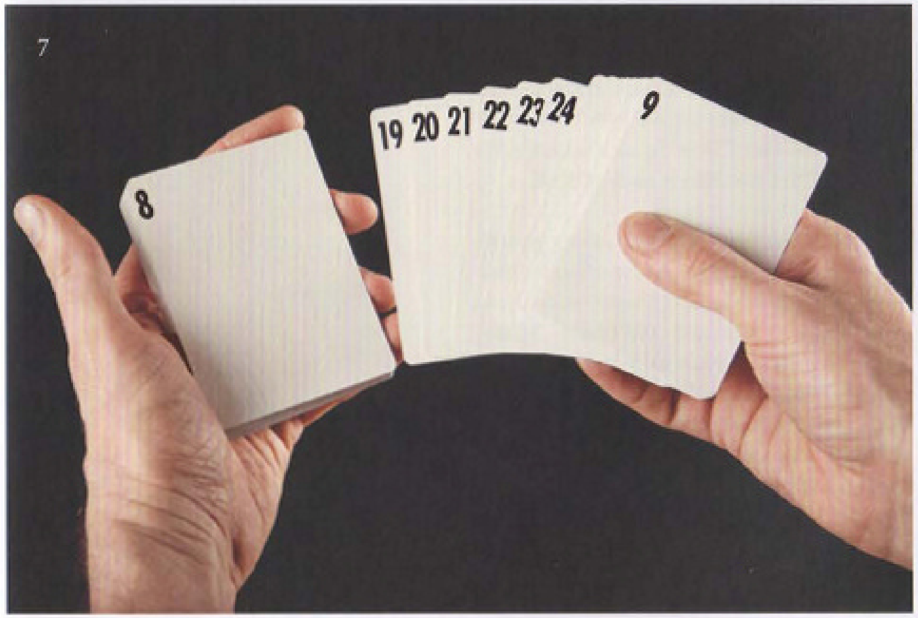
[3] Like, for example Juan Tamariz's fantastic "Localización Exacta" from *Sinfonía en Mnemónica Mayor*, found under the title of "Exact Location" on page 145 of the English edition.

[4] *The Green Angle Separation* (Green, 1995), see also *Card College Vol. 4* (Giobbi, 2000), page 903.



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Nevertheless, for some situations the effect itself remains rather too cold. Other than the kicker at the end, there is not much emotion, no strong, memorable hands, etc. Here, then, is another way to interpret the effect that is less academic (and instead much more absurd):

An alternative plot

Excitedly claim you thought of a brilliant new way to learn what cards your opponents are holding in a game. To illustrate, have the spectator shuffle a deck and deal a two-handed game of Poker as described. Turn the hands face up commenting: *"In a real game, I would see my hand, but not yours, of course. This is just for illustration."*

"At that point I would secretly get out a second deck and shuffle it." To those words run the ten cards as described. *"But not just with any shuffle. I would shuffle exactly like you!"* Again matching your actions to your words give your deck a false riffle shuffle. *"And I would cut exactly like you."* Give your deck a false cut. *"Then I'd deal exactly like you."* Deal the two hands as described.

"You see? Because I did everything exactly like you, there must be the same cards. Brilliant!" Pause and look at them excitedly, as if you had just invented cold fusion. Misinterpreting their silence as a lack of understanding, continue: *"Look, here's my hand."* Turn over the first hand to show that, incredibly, you are indeed holding the same cards the spectator dealt you from the other deck!

"To see what you have, I can just look here." Turn over the equivalent of his hand and show a second perfect match to finish. The effect is the same, but the weird pseudo-logic of the plot makes it feel very different.

Echoes

Echoes

This effect combines two basic principles of memorized-deck magic: Identifying chosen cards by glimpsing the previous card in the stack and using the deck as an Open Index to quickly locate cards seemingly without looking. The result is a very direct triple prediction, framed, however, as something different altogether.

EFFECT

The performer takes a random card out of the deck and places it onto the table, sight unseen. A spectator is asked to *"pick an echo"*: He removes a card and places it with the performer's. These actions are repeated with two more members of the audience. Showing all six cards, it is seen that the spectators' choices were indeed echoes of the performer's: All three selections are the exact mates of the original cards!

METHOD OVERVIEW

The performer's first card is actually a double: A card and its mate are placed onto the table as one. Each time a spectator freely selects a card, its identity is learned by glimpsing the previous card in the stack. The selected card's mate is then placed down for the next spectator, following the one-ahead principle. When the cards are shown at the end, the previously hidden card is displayed and another card concealed in its place to show three pairs of mates.[1]

PERFORMANCE

Before the performance, bring any pair of mates to the top. (On good days, I take a break above the mate of the top card and use a double cover Zarrow shuffle to bring the two together on top.[2] An easier way is to take the same break above the mate of the top card and use a slip cut followed by a double undercut to bring the two mates together to the top. You can also use a side steal or even just spread through the deck face up and cull the mate of the top card to the back. Either way, the top two cards are mates.)

Tell your audience that during a performance in the Swiss Alps (or the Rocky Mountains, the Andes or wherever you have actually performed) you noticed that there is a natural phenomenon, namely the occurrence of echoes, which makes the cards behave in a strange way. *"I would love to show you"*, you continue with a hint of regret, "*but it only works in the mountains.*"

Suddenly realize that instead of moving the whole show to a height of ten thousand feet, you can just trick the cards into believing they are in the Swiss Alps! To do that, spread the deck face down (*"This is flat country, you see."*) and start a domino-turnover, stopping halfway and splitting the spread to make two peaks as in the classic flourish (Photo 1).

Having thus convinced the cards they are now in the mountains, square everything and offer to show their strange behaviour.

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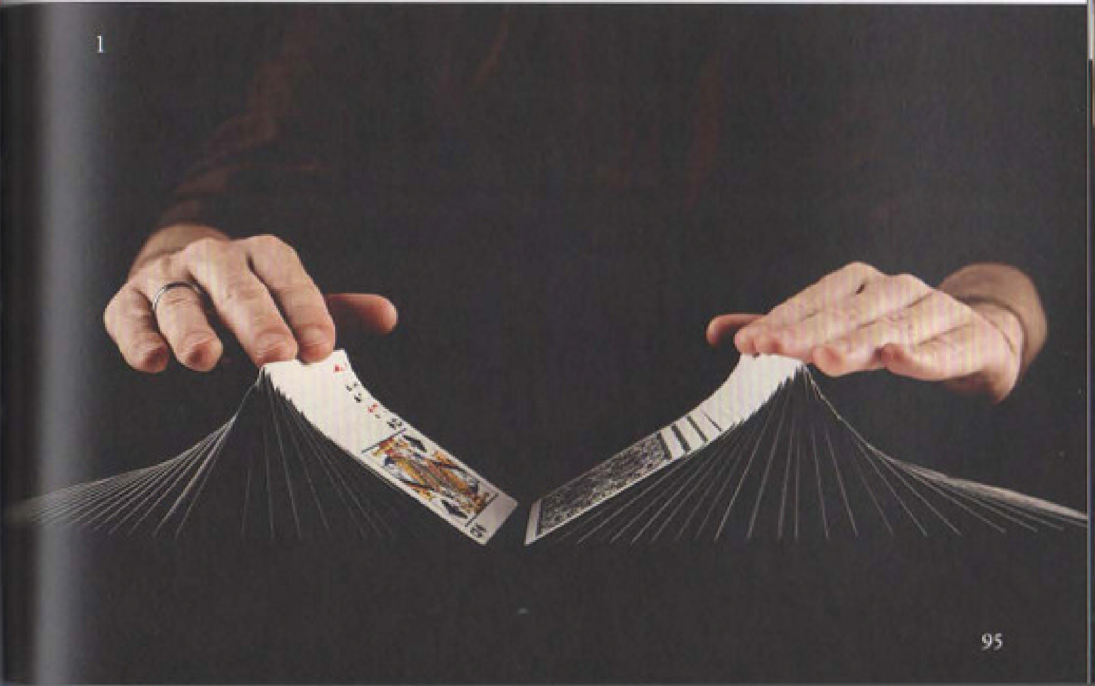
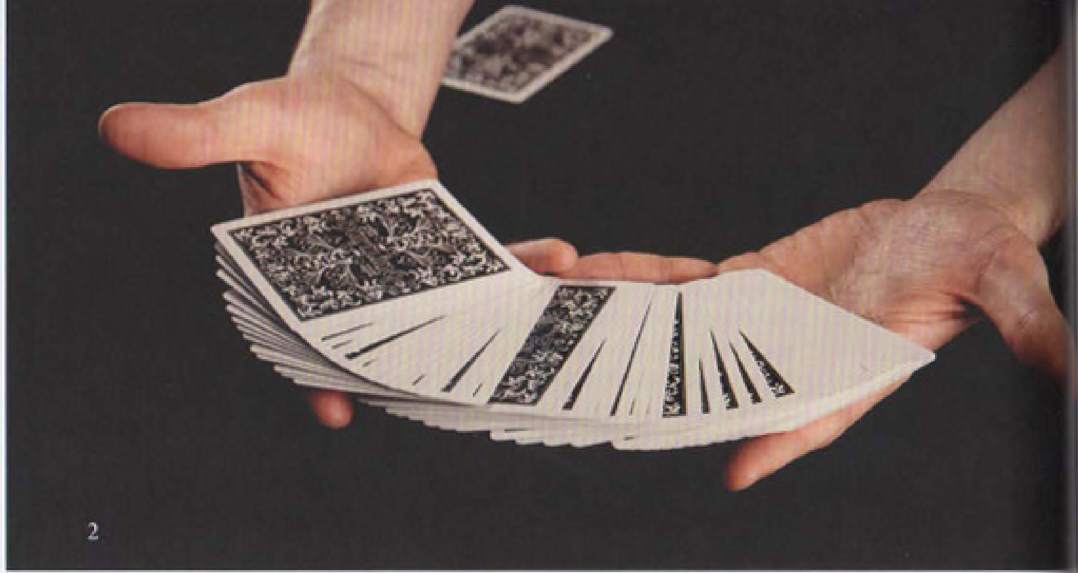
[1] A well-known effect that uses the one-ahead principle in a similar way is Hen Fetsch's "Symbologic" from 1954. It can be found in *Fetsching Magic, The Life and Legacy of Hen Fetsch* (Spencer, 2007) page 141.

[2] See footnote 12 of "Top of the Heaps" on page 130.



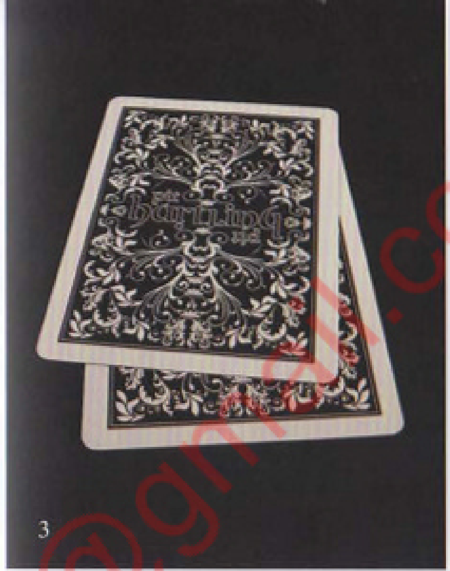
1


2

False cut the deck and apparently place the top card onto the table. In fact, the top two cards are placed down as one by holding them in end grip and letting them drop to the table from very short distance. Immediately turn to a spectator on your left and spread the deck between your hands. (The immediate spreading of the deck makes the tabling of the double card an in-transit action and your arms partly cover the card(s), which rests safely near you in the shadow zone (Photo 2).)[3]

Invite the spectator to pick any card from the deck without looking at it. When he has removed a card cut the deck at that spot and take the card from him.[4] Place the selection on top of your card covering the front edge of the double (Photo 3).

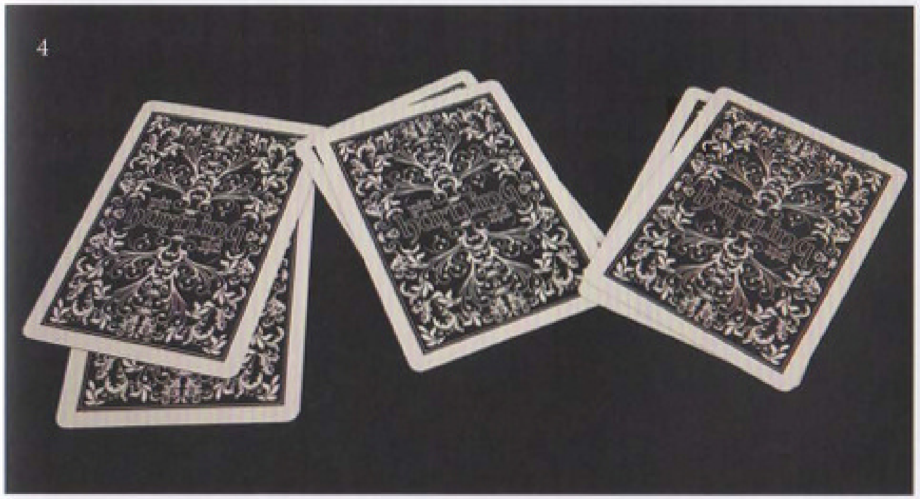
A look at the face of the deck will tell you which card the spectator picked (the next card in the memorized sequence). Cut the deck a few times to bring the mate of his card to the top[5], executing the last cut to the table. Clearly take the top card off the deck and put it in front of you with the previous cards. The card is placed as separate as possible from the first pair, but with its top left corner still slightly overlapping the previous card. This can be seen in Photo 4 (with some subsequent cards already shown as well).


3

Make a fan and, holding it with one hand, offer the deck to a second spectator in front of you to choose a card. Place his selection onto your card as before. In closing the fan take an injog at the point where the card was removed and cut the deck, glimpsing the card above the injog in the process, which will again cue to you the spectator's card. As before, cut the mate of his selection to the top, place the deck onto the table and pick off the top card, placing it onto the previous two pairs, this time slightly overlapping at the bottom right corner (Photo 4 again).

Finally, extend the deck in a face down ribbon spread in front of a spectator to your right and have him remove a card sight unseen. Leave the deck on the table and place this third card onto yours.

Returning to the theme from the beginning, say: *"Now, what is an echo? You shout*


4

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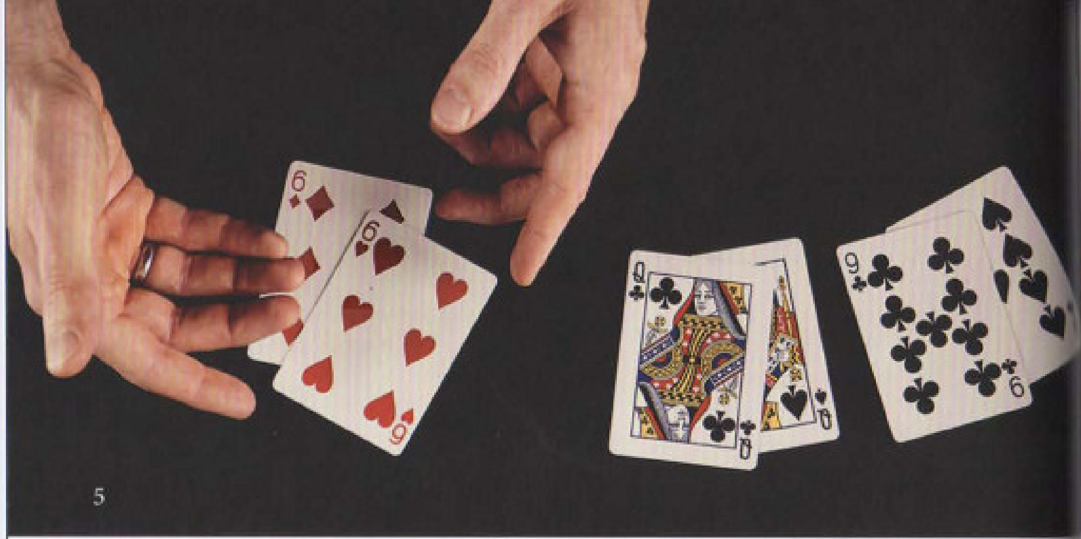
[3] Coincidentally, all topics in this paragraph (the handling of double cards, in-transit actions and the concept of the "shadow"- vs. "illuminated" zone of attention) have been thoroughly discussed (if not introduced) by Arturo de Ascanio. See *El Manejo de la Carta Doble* (Ascanio, 1980), "El "Timing" y su Fundamento" in *Ilusionismo*, number 246, November 1969, and "Análisis de un Juego" (*Circular* of the Escuela Mágica de Madrid, number 26, February 1977). All these can also be found, among many other essential texts, in *La Magia de Ascanio – La Concepción Estructural de la Magia* (Ascanio, Etcheverry, 2000) as well as in the English edition *The Magic of Ascanio – The Structural Conception of Magic* (Ascanio, Etcheverry, Benatar, 2006).

[4] To make the cutting at that spot less apparent, after separating the spread, roughly square the packets in each hand and pause a beat before placing the packet from your right hand under the cards in your left in order to free your right hand to take the selection from the spectator (another in-transit action). You can also reverse spread the two halves before placing them together, a manoeuvre possibly first conceived in the late 1940s or early 1950s by J. B. Bernat, see *Cartomagia: 40 anos después* (Bernat, 1981), page 69.

[5] See "Cutting a card to the top" on page 56.


5

something, and what comes back is exactly the same. Well, not exactly *the same, but very similar. And you see, the same happens with the cards."*

Following these words, use your left hand unhurriedly to scoop up all the cards in front of you. Because the pairs overlap, everything will square neatly into a packet, which you hold in face-up dealing position. Display the card on the face of the packet and say (for example): *"Let's see; I placed down the Nine of Spades..."* Spread over the top card to reveal the card's mate: *"...and you answered with the Nine of Clubs."* After a short pause drop the two cards together onto the table to your left. Repeat the same with the next cards, showing another pair (*"A black Queen from me – and a black Queen from you"*, for example) and drop those two in front of you. Momentarily take the remaining packet in end grip with your right hand and without pause pull the top card into the left hand with the left thumb. In a brief gesture rotate both hands, displaying the two (?) cards at the fingertips before dropping the double card from the right hand onto the table, followed by the card from the left (Photo 5). Lean back and let your hands be seen empty. Their cards were the exact echoes of yours!

RETURNING HOME

To bring the deck back to memorized order, seven cards have to be replaced to their positions. Here is one way to do that: During the reaction and the casual chat afterwards, arrange the seven cards in memorized order from the back to the face (the card with the lowest stack number at the back, the card with the highest stack number on the face of the packet). Once in order, cut the packet to bring the card to the back that directly follows the one currently on the face of the deck. That done, place the packet on the face of the deck.

Hold the deck in left-hand dealing position with the right hand over it in end grip. Spread to the spot where the card on the face of the deck belongs, hold a break there and slip the card from the face to that position with the left thumb. Continue spreading and repeat with the remaining cards.

COMMENTS

Progression

Note that while the method is always the same, the handling for the selections is slightly different each time: For the first card, the deck is spread from hand to hand, the second card is chosen from a fan held in one hand, and for the last card the deck is spread on the table. Varying the procedure keeps everything from becoming monotonous and using handlings of increasing freedom creates a certain sense of progression.[6]

The key to "Echoes" is to locate the required cards smoothly. It does not need to be quick, and it is perfectly ok to use several cuts, but you must avoid the feel of looking for a specific card. If you successfully convey the impression that for each spectator you just take any random card from the deck, "Echoes" will be a very strong piece of magic.

After replacing all cards in their positions (see above), you may want to add the following epilogue: Make a face-down ribbon spread and mumble something about *"bringing back the deck"* while pressing and squeezing the spread in different spots as if to flatten it (Photo 6). Once done, square the deck, place the top card onto the table and have a spectator pick any card. Both are turned over to show they are completely different. Satisfied, take the cards back, say: *"Ok, good! Just checking."* and continue with the next piece.

---

[6] Darwin Ortiz aptly calls this strategy "Artificial Progression through Conservation"; see *Strong Magic* (Ortiz, 1994), page 181.

6

Truth and Artistic Truth

In the presentation it is suggested you mention a show you had in the mountains. It may seem of little consequence, but if at all possible, I believe it is good to think of an occasion when you actually did perform in the mountains (or else change the line). For some mysterious reason, people will know whether you are talking about a real occurrence or just making things up. Sticking to the truth even in seemingly minor matters will make a noticeable difference. Juan Tamariz calls this the mystery of truth, and it is one of the "Seven Veils" in his beautiful essay of that title.[7]

One might wonder how this rigorous insistence on truth goes together with all the obviously made-up plots in magic (case in point: playing cards do not actually behave like echoes). This, then, is about "artistic truth": Plots and presentations can be patently absurd and still be "true" in an artistic sense, if they are just openly fictitious and clearly marked as such. The actor claiming to be Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is not telling the truth, but, crucially, the audience is perfectly aware of the fact. This is the difference between artistic truth and just plain lying (as in the case of professional "psychics", for example). We cannot all be great artists, but we can always try to be honest to our audience – even if only when telling them about that show we did in the mountains.

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[7] "Los Siete Velos Mágicos" in the *Circular* of the Escuela Mágica de Madrid, August 2001.

The Poker Formulas

The Poker Formulas

This is an unusual solution to the "Any Poker Hand Called For" plot. The inspiration came from the legendary Walter Scott and his dealing work[1]: Scott would famously use second deals to make certain (punched) cards fall to his own hand from a shuffled deck.

It occurred to me that by using a memorized deck, apart from doing away with the punches, it should in principle be possible to deal a whole range of hands.

With the aid of my friend Martin Eisele and some computer simulations, this hunch was quickly confirmed. In fact, it was shown that with nothing but a straight cut and second deals at the right spots, (almost) any Poker hand can be dealt to (almost) any number of players.

EFFECT

The performer produces several crinkled sheets of paper, covered with hundreds and hundreds of numbers, like lines of code. These, he explains, are his "Poker Formulas". To demonstrate the power of the formulas, any specific Poker hand is named (a Full House, Sevens over Kings, say) as well as a number of players (six, for example).

Rustling his papers, the performer finds the right formula and "programs" it into the deck: The cards are softly riffled, tapped and twisted, all clearly without changing the position of any card. The deck is slowly dealt to the requested number of players, the performer's cards are shown, and indeed – he received exactly the requested hand! The formulas are sold to the highest bidder.

METHOD OVERVIEW

While the formulas are thought to be just an amusing presentational gimmick, they are in fact quite real: There is a line for every possible hand that indicates where to cut the deck and when to deal seconds. Following these instructions, the performer will always receive the requested hand. It may sound hard to believe, but in principle it really works with any stack (that has a reasonably random distribution of suits and values) and is entirely practical.

THE LIST

With the font size I currently use, the list covers about five and a half pages (three letter-size sheets).[2] In order not to inflate the book but still clearly explain the workings, below you will find short excerpts from the lists for the Tamariz stack as well as the Aronson stack. The full lists can be downloaded at www.pokerformulas.com. On that site you will also find a formula-generator for any stack, brilliantly provided by Denis Behr: You just enter the cards in the order you wish (comfortably done by clicking on images of cards) and the program will generate the Poker Formulas for that order.

PERFORMANCE

Produce the list and call them your "Poker Formulas". Explain that with the aid of these formulas you can program the deck, and the cards will magically arrange themselves to give you any Poker hand you wish for.

Invite your spectators to name Poker hands, reminding them briefly of the options: *"There's One Pair, Two Pair, Three-of-a-Kind, and then the more interesting hands: Straight, Flush, Full House, Four-of-a-Kind, Straight Flush and Royal Flush."*

As the first three hands do not even use all five cards, they are somewhat less impressive, and openly saying so, as indicated above, all but eliminates them. (Should someone insist, no problem – any hand is possible. However, for reasons mentioned below, I always try to guide them towards a Full House.)

With a general Poker hand named, some specifics are chosen: For a Straight, they choose the high card (every Straight is possible, from a Five-high Straight to an Ace-high Straight). For a Flush, Straight Flush or Royal Flush they name the suit. For a Four-of-a-Kind they choose the value, and for a Full House they choose first one value, then another, and then even which of the two shall be the Three-of-a-Kind and which the Pair. (This is why a Full House is especially nice: While any hand allows for a choice of specifics, the Full House allows the most choices. This really drives home the freedom and scope.)

After a specific hand has been chosen, ruffle your pages explaining that you must find the requested hand on the list (Photo 1). Even though this will get a laugh, for once you are telling the truth.

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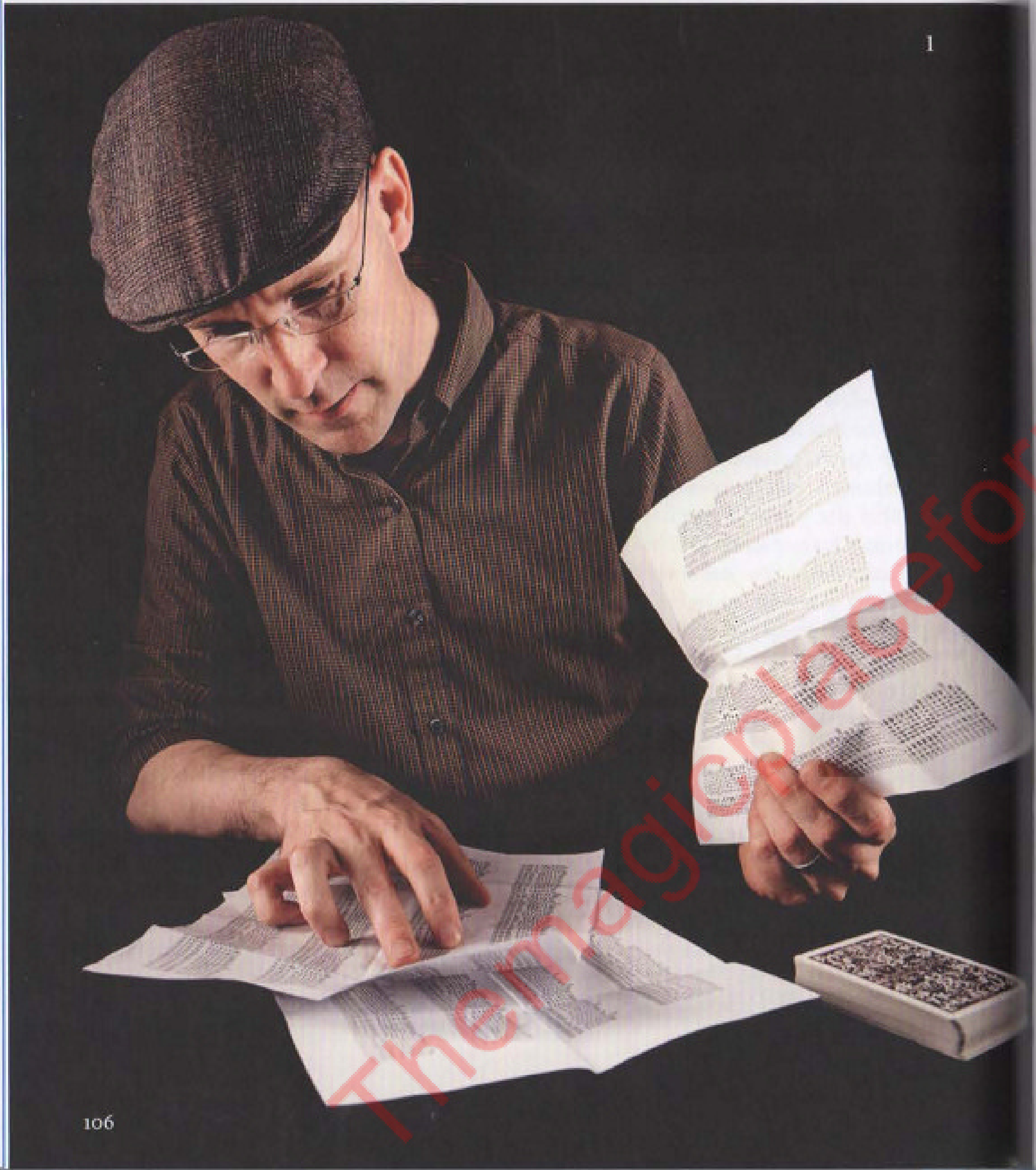
[1] *The Phantom at the Card Table* (McGuire, 1931) and *Phantoms of the Card Table* (Britland and Gazzo, 2004).

[2] It is entirely possible to fit the list on two sheets, but in this piece I want to convey a hint of "mad genius", and the image of "crazily rummaging through papers" seems to work best with at least three of them. (If you want more, you can of course always repeat pages as you see fit.)

Let's have a look at the list. Here are some exemplary lines:


1

ARONSON STACK

(S 5-9) 2 - 0 0 1 1 1 (3)
(S 5-9) 48 - 0 3 0 1 3 (4)
(S 5-9) 42 - 0 2 3 4 0 (5)
(S 5-9) 37 - 5 0 0 0 0 (6)
(S 5-9) 39 - 0 6 0 0 5 (7)
(S 5-9) 31 - 0 0 0 6 0 (8)
(S 5-9) 2 - 7 0 8 9 0 (9)
(S 5-9) 51 - 0 0 8 0 8 (10)

(F-D) 12 - 0 0 0 0 0 (3)
(F-D) 5 - 0 0 2 0 3 (4)
(F-D) 4 - 0 0 4 0 3 (5)
(F-D) 3 - 0 0 0 0 5 (6)
(F-D) 1 - 7 0 6 5 0 (7)
(F-D) 44 - 0 8 7 0 0 (8)
(F-D) 43 - 0 0 0 0 0 (9)
(F-D) 11 - 0 0 5 8 0 (10)

(12-1) 42 - 0 2 $\underline{4}$ $\underline{2}$ 6 (6)
(12-1) 41 - 0 2 $\underline{0}$ $\underline{7}$ 4 (7)
(12-1) 42 - 0 $\underline{0}$ $\underline{4}$ 7 4 (8)
(12-1) 38 - 9 3 $\underline{6}$ $\underline{0}$ 4 (9)
(12-1) 37 - 10 3 $\underline{5}$ $\underline{7}$ 1 (10)

(5) 2 - 1 0 0 3 0 (5)
(5) 49 - 0 0 3 5 0 (6)
(5) 51 - 4 6 0 0 0 (7)
(5) 47 - 0 8 8 0 0 (8)
(5) 46 - 0 0 8 6 0 (9)
(5) 44 - 10 0 8 5 0 (10)

(SF-H 3-7) 4 - 3 1 0 4 0 (7)
(SF-H 3-7) 0 - 7 4 8 5 7 (8)
(SF-H 3-7) 50 - 0 5 0 4 5 (9)
(SF-H 3-7) 48 - 10 6 9 3 3 (10)

(RF-D) 8 - 0 4 1 0 4 (6)
(RF-D) 6 - 7 5 1 5 2 (7)

TAMARIZ STACK

(S 5-9) 1 - 2 2 2 3 0 (3)
(S 5-9) 46 - 0 2 1 2 0 (4)
(S 5-9) 40 - 4 0 0 0 5 (5)
(S 5-9) 11 - 0 0 0 1 0 (6)
(S 5-9) 2 - 0 0 0 6 0 (7)
(S 5-9) 9 - 0 0 0 0 8 (8)
(S 5-9) 24 - 0 8 8 0 0 (9)
(S 5-9) 5 - 0 0 8 9 0 (10)

(F-D) 43 - 0 0 0 0 0 (3)
(F-D) 38 - 0 0 3 2 0 (4)
(F-D) 14 - 0 5 0 3 0 (5)
(F-D) 40 - 0 0 0 0 6 (6)
(F-D) 18 - 0 0 0 0 6 (7)
(F-D) 18 - 0 6 0 7 0 (8)
(F-D) 37 - 0 0 0 7 8 (9)
(F-D) 9 - 0 0 0 0 9 (10)

(12-1) 42 - 0 2 $\underline{1}$ $\underline{4}$ 4 (4)
(12-1) 43 - 0 $\underline{3}$ $\underline{5}$ 0 2 (5)
(12-1) 40 - 0 $\underline{5}$ $\underline{6}$ 5 1 (6)
(12-1) 34 - $\underline{5}$ 0 $\underline{3}$ 7 3 (7)
(12-1) 30 - $\underline{8}$ 0 $\underline{5}$ 8 3 (8)

(5) 5 - 3 5 0 0 0 (5)
(5) 1 - 6 0 3 0 5 (6)
(5) 3 - 5 6 7 6 0 (7)
(5) 0 - 0 0 8 6 0 (8)
(5) 50 - 9 0 0 5 0 (9)
(5) 49 - 10 9 8 3 0 (10)

(SF-H 6-10) 6 - 0 3 1 0 3 (8)
(SF-H 6-10) 4 - 9 4 1 7 1 (9)

(RF-D) 25 - 1 2 4 5 4 (5)
(RF-D) 21 - 5 5 0 6 4 (6)
(RF-D) 18 - 7 0 0 0 3 (7)

The hands are listed in order of increasing strength, starting with the Straight.[3] The kind of hand is indicated at the very left of each formula (in brackets): "S" stands for Straight, "F" is a Flush, two numbers with a dash (13-5) is a Full House, a single number is the Four-of-a-Kind of that value, "SF" stands for Straight Flush and "RF" is the Royal Flush. Jack is always "11", Queen "12", King "13" and Ace "1".

The specifics are also found in the brackets: (S 4-8) is a Straight from Four to Eight, (F-D) is a Flush in Diamonds, (13-5) is the Full House Kings over Fives (the first number always indicates the Three-of-a-Kind, the second number the Pair), (SF-H 6-10) is a Straight Flush in Hearts from the Six to the Ten and (RF-D) stands for the Royal Flush in Diamonds, to give just a few examples.

On closer inspection you will find that every hand is listed more than once. This is because your spectators can also choose the number of players as indicated at the right end of each formula (also in brackets). Most hands are available for anything from four to ten players. In several cases, however, the number of hands is somewhat restricted: Depending on the distribution of the cards in the stack, some hands can be dealt only for a certain range of players. So watch out: Before asking for a number of players, make sure to look up the selected hand and see which options are available. (*"How many players would you like? Let's make it interesting, say: Seven, eight, nine or ten?"*)

With a hand and a number of players specified, here's how to deal that request:

The number after the first pair of brackets indicates where to cut the deck: Simply cut the card with that stack number to the bottom.[4] The remaining part of each formula consists of five numbers. These numbers represent five rounds of dealing (there will always be five rounds, as a Poker hand has five cards). Openly read out these five numbers, explaining that they tell you how to "program" the deck.

Pick up the deck, and do whatever you feel best indicates that you are "programming" the deck while making it perfectly clear that you are not changing the position of any card. This is, of course, the magic gesture. I usually riffle a corner of the deck as many times as the first number indicates. Whenever there is a zero among the numbers, I just sit back and pause a beat, as if this takes care of that. Naming the next number, I hold the deck between my hands and give it the characteristic crack (Photo 2), and for the last two I usually do nothing again, explaining that those numbers *"cancel each other out"*.

With the deck thus "programmed", everything is officially done: Allegedly, the cards have magically arranged themselves and all that remains is to deal.

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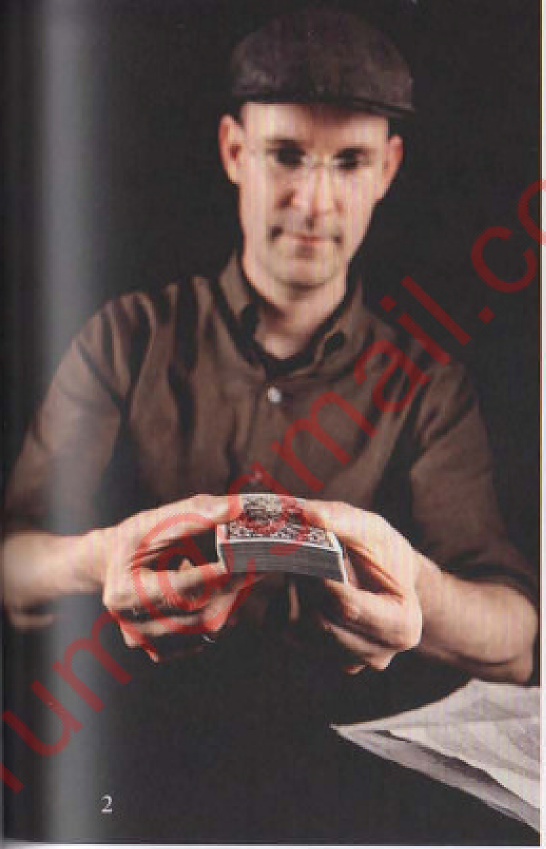
[3] The weaker hands (One Pair, Two Pair and Three-of-a-Kind) are actually also included in the list, see the comments.

[4] This should be done while still in non-performing mode, concerning the cards: For now, you are just looking-up the formula and toying with the deck. As soon as the deck is cut, put it on the table. See also "Cutting a card to the top" on page 56.



2

It is during the deal, of course, when the work is done. Let's return to those five numbers: Each number tells you on which hand to start second dealing in that round. In other words, it indicates which card to hold back and deal onto your own hand. When the number is 4, for example, you would deal regularly to the first, second and third players and then hold back the fourth card, dealing continuous seconds until you come to your own hand, where you deal that card. If a number is the same as the number of players it means you deal a second only on the last (your own) hand. If a number is 0 it means that no second deal is required – that round is dealt fairly. (When the last of the five numbers happens to be 0, you may want to hand the deck to a spectator to deal the last round himself.)

While all this may appear complicated at first sight, it is really quite straightforward. Here's a full example:

Suppose you want to deal a Full House, Queens over Aces from the Aronson stack. (For the Tamariz stack, just look at the list for that stack above and adjust this example accordingly. Other stacks work similarly, of course.) Locate the lines representing the wanted hand (12-1) and look at the numbers in brackets at the end. You will find this hand is offered for anything from six to ten players. Have any of those numbers chosen. Suppose they want seven players. According to the list the corresponding formula is 41 – 0 2 0 7 4. So, cut stack number 41 (Two of Spades) to the bottom.

After reading out the five numbers 0 2 0 7 4 and "programming" the deck (the magic gesture), deal the cards to seven players as follows (all cards are dealt face down):

The first number is 0, so the first round is dealt normally.

The next number is 2. This means to start second dealing on the second hand: The first player gets his card regularly from the top, and then, starting with the second player, continuous seconds are used until you come to your own hand, where you deal the held-back card. In other words, you get the card that would normally have fallen to the second player.

The next number is 0 again so it's another clean round.

The number for the next round is 7. This means you start second dealing on the seventh hand. This is the last hand, so you deal the first six cards normally, followed by a second deal on your own hand.

Finally, the last number is 4, so you deal normally to the first three players and start second dealing on the fourth hand. Continue with second deals until you come to your own hand, where you deal the held-back card.

Trying this for the first time, when looking at your cards you may actually surprise yourself: You are holding exactly the requested hand.

RETURNING HOME

To restore the deck turn your hand face down and place it on top of the previous hand. Together, they go on top of the one before and so on, collecting the hands from right to left. Place the combined packet onto the deck, holding a break. Deal all the cards above the break face down into five piles from left to right and then collect the packets from right to left.[5] Place the combined packet onto the table and place the rest of the deck on top. This has undone the deal.[6]

However, the cards that were displaced by the second deals still have to be corrected. Fortunately, this is very easy and nothing needs to be remembered. This trick basically uses the second deal as a cull (as did Walter Scott): Certain cards are gathered from their positions to fall together on the performer's hand. It seems only fitting, then, that a cull is used to undo the second deals:

Spread through the deck face up. Whenever you come to a card out of position, cull it under the spread and insert it to its right spot. That's it. The misplaced cards will appear one at a time – you will always be able to replace one before having to cull the next – so everything is quite easy. (The number of misplaced cards that need to be corrected is always five minus the number of zeros in the formula – something to keep in mind to avoid wondering if you have overlooked any in case only a couple or so were culled. Thanks go to Denis Behr for pointing out this handy checkpoint.)

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[5] It is recommended to begin this as the audience still reacts and to deal quite quickly (at the speed I use, dealing the whole deck takes about 15 seconds). To help motivate the deal you may say: *"I'd better separate the good cards a bit or they will be all together. Can very easily get you shot!"*

[6] The general formula for undoing a deal is this: A deal of x packets of y cards each is undone by dealing y packets of x cards each. During a performance of "The Poker Formulas" you will always deal x hands of 5 cards. So to undo this you deal five hands of x cards. Instead of counting, however, you simply hold a break between the packet and the rest of the deck and deal all the cards above the break. (The above general rule and many further details can be found in Juan Tamariz' *Sinfonía in Mnemónica Major* or in the English edition *Mnemonica* on page 283.)

3

COMMENTS

One Pair, Two Pair and Three-of-a-Kind

As you may have noticed, in the formulas for the Full Houses some of the numbers are underlined. These markings indicate the two cards in every Full House that make the Pair (the other three are the Three-of-a-Kind). By replacing the appropriate card(s) of a Full House with (an) indifferent card(s), you will receive One Pair, Two Pairs or Three-of-a-Kind, instead. Replacing any card with an indifferent card is simply done by dealing cleanly where the formula would indicate second deals (or dealing a second to your own hand when there is actually a zero at that spot).

In this way, you can deal any of those weaker hands, should anyone insist. In all the years I have used the Poker Formulas this has happened only very few times. It is mentioned here for the sake of completeness.

"If you can't hide it, paint it red."

There were ideas to access the information secretly (like having the numbers written in one of those magic flip-books that would show something else when flipped the other way, or using radio and having an assistant transmit the information to the performer via an earpiece or onto a display on the side of the card case). There were also ideas to integrate the numbers into the design (printing them onto a large close-up pad or even on the backs of the cards themselves, etc.). Ultimately, however, I found that openly displaying the numbers and giving them a good, official name kills two birds with one stone: The method is hidden in plain sight and at the same time the notion of "Poker Formulas" makes for a very memorable plot.

Finally: If you are lucky enough to have a friend like Denis Behr you can also use the handwritten formulas he made for your birthday (Photo 3).

Just Like That

Just Like That

I don't particularly like the term "commercial" when applied to a magic effect. The expression has long become a buzzword of the easy-to-do school, often coupled with the "it's not the method, it's the effect that counts" fallacy.

If the expression is just to mean "direct, practical and strong", however, "Just Like That" must be one of the most commercial effects in the book. I have always thought of this as the "sponge balls of memorized-deck magic", and when the objective is to quickly win over a sceptic, this is often my trick of choice.

It is also the trick with the shortest description in the book.

EFFECT

The performer and a spectator each freely think of any card. No less freely, they each remove a card from the deck and place it into their respective pockets. Amazingly, both the performer and the spectator have found the other's thought-of card. Just like that.

METHOD OVERVIEW

The performer finds the spectator's card: When the spectator names his mental selection, that card is located, palmed and apparently taken from the pocket.

The spectator finds the performer's card: The performer secretly learns which card the spectator has removed from the deck and names it as his mental selection.

PERFORMANCE

Invite a spectator to think of any card. Pretend to do the same (you may want to spread the cards with the faces towards you and look them over as you apparently make your choice).

Claim that it is actually quite easy to locate thought-of cards: *"All it takes is to give the cards a few cuts and to stop when you feel you have hit the right spot."* Matching the actions to your words give the deck a number of complete cuts and eventually place the top card into your pocket. (A glance at the face of the deck will tell you which card it is. Remember it.)[1]

Hand the deck to the spectator, asking him to give the cards a complete cut. When he complies ask him to *"do that again, but this time behind your back."* Ask him to continue cutting the deck behind his back until he feels the time is right, and then to take the top card and place it sight-unseen into a pocket.

As you retrieve the deck from him, a glance at the bottom card will tell you the card in his pocket (the next card in mnemonic order).

Recap what happened: Each of you thought of a card and each took a card from the deck. Say: *"All we can do now is to see how we did. I thought of the Seven of Spades. Which was yours?"* (Here, of course, you name the card in his pocket.)

When he names his card, simply repeat the names of both cards to recap. At the same time calmly bring his card to the top of the deck (see "Cutting a card to the top" on page 56). Have him remove the card from his pocket and hold it face down without showing its face just yet.

As he removes his card, palm the top card in the right hand and apparently bring it out as the card from your pocket.

Hold your card next to his and one last time repeat the names of the selections before you both turn the cards face up. Incredibly, you have found each other's mental selection – just like that!

RETURNING HOME

Place both cards back to their positions (the spectator's card simply goes on top of the deck). Don't forget to retrieve the card from your pocket and place it where it belongs as well.

COMMENTS

I believe "Just Like That" is best performed calmly. Try doing everything in distinct steps, pausing briefly after each action. (You both think of a card. You both place a card in your pocket. The cards are named and taken out. The cards are shown.) Sometimes, I use the phrase "Just like that" as a little refrain[2] (*"Think of any card – just like that."*, *"Give the deck a few cuts – just like that"*, etc.). This gives everything a certain structure and emphasizes the effect's clarity.

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[1] I often place the Ace of Hearts or some other popular card into my pocket: One more chance to get lucky.

[2] Famously, *"Just like that!"* was also the catchphrase of comedic genius Tommy Cooper. While it has little to do with the effect and is pretty much incidental, I like to think of it as a small tribute to one of my heroes.

Quartets

7
7
7
7
4
4
A
9
Q
10
6
A
9
4
3

Quartets

When Denis Behr and I went for a little walk one sunny afternoon some fifteen years ago we came upon a method for controlling any four-of-a-kind from a memorized deck. It involves memorizing the distances of the cards within each quartet and can be found in Denis' excellent book Handcrafted Card Magic (see "Plop" on page 20).

The routines in this section all use this concept. It is applied in a number of different ways to achieve a variety of effects. There is some extra memory work involved, but trust me, it is worth it – the results are among audiences' favourite effects from this book.

If you are already familiar with the concept from Denis' book, feel free to skip directly to the tricks. Otherwise, just read on – for the sake of completeness it is explained here again. (That said, I recommend you stop reading, give yourself a little slap and get *Handcrafted Card Magic* right away!)

CONTROLLING QUARTETS

With a deck in memorized order you know the position of every card. Thus, it is theoretically possible to control any cards you want (a freely named four-of-a-kind, say) by spreading through the face-down deck, silently reciting the order, and controlling the desired cards as you come to them (with a spread cull, for example).

In practice, however, things are not that easy. If you give it a try, you will probably find that the process is quite slow, you may have to spread through a lot of cards, do lots of thinking, and you will probably find it very difficult to talk. In other words: It is impractical.

It would be much quicker and easier if instead of having to go through the deck card by card you could "jump" directly to the right spots. This is where the distance numbers come in:

DISTANCE NUMBERS

The idea is simple: For any given four-of-a-kind, instead of just knowing the absolute positions of the four cards in the deck, you also memorize their relative distances from each other.

Consider for example the four Threes. If you are using the Tamariz stack they will be at positions 4, 12, 21 and 28. Looking at the distances between them we find they are eight, nine and seven cards apart, respectively. So, for the Threes the distance numbers are (8, 9, 7).

Knowing those three numbers you no longer need to go through the deck card for card and recite the order – you can go directly to the target cards without thinking about the order at all.[1]

Sometimes, the distances within a quartet can be quite big. To optimize this, for every quartet we choose which of the four cards we start counting from:

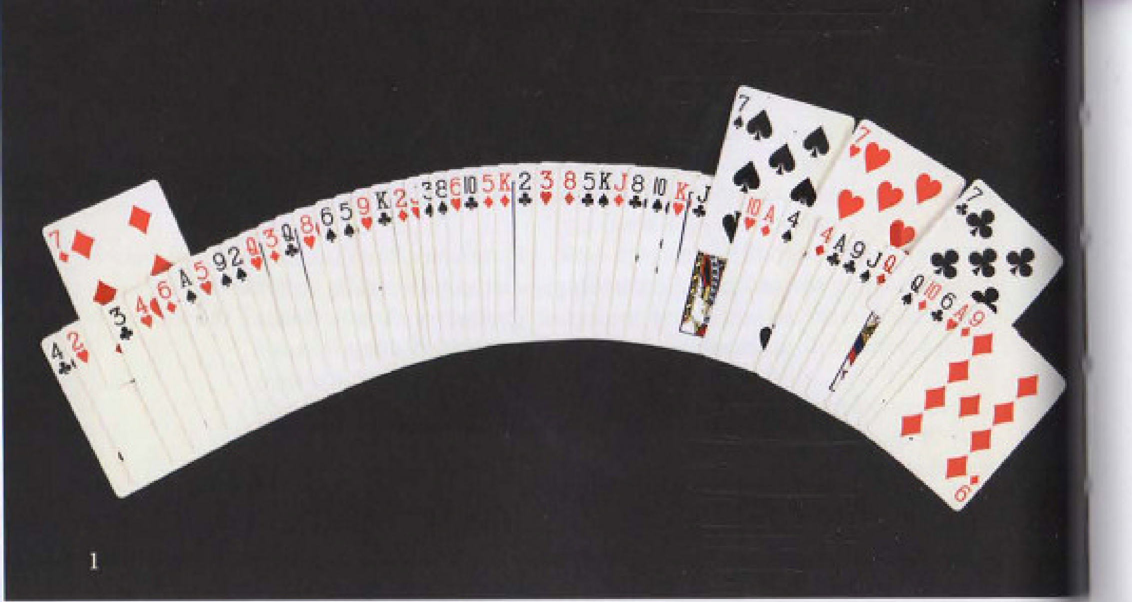
THE "FIRST" CARD OF A QUARTET

In some cases the four cards of a quartet can be grouped closer together by giving the deck a cut. Look for example at the four Sevens (again in the Tamariz stack): They are at positions 3, 37, 41 and 47 (Photo 1). As you can see, cutting the deck anywhere in the big gap between the first and the second Seven will group all four much closer together (Photo 2).

Note that in this new (cut) position the first Seven is now the Seven of Spades. This is what is meant in this chapter by a card being the "first" of its value: It is not necessarily the first of that value in regular memorized order (in case of the Sevens that honour would go to the Seven of Diamonds at stack number 3 (Photo 1 again)), but the first *when the deck is cut so that all four are grouped together as closely as possible.*

---

[1] For counting cards while spreading through the deck have a look at the appropriately named "Counting Cards while spreading them between the hands" in the third volume of Roberto Giobbi's, *Card College*, page 510. From Alex Elmsley comes the additional tip to count in a 3-3-2-2 rhythm which consists of a block of ten cards and can easily be done by feel. (Note: This premium-quality footnote is stolen word for word from *Handcrafted Card Magic* (Behr, 2007), page 21.)



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By starting the count with that "first" card of the quartet you assure that the four will be as close together as possible and you will always have to spread through the minimum number of cards.

THE LIST

With this you are now ready for some homework: For each value you need to memorize the suit of the first card (see above) and how far away the other three lie (the three distance numbers). Here are the appropriate lists for the Tamariz stack and the Aronson stack. Pick yours and commit it to memory:[2,3]

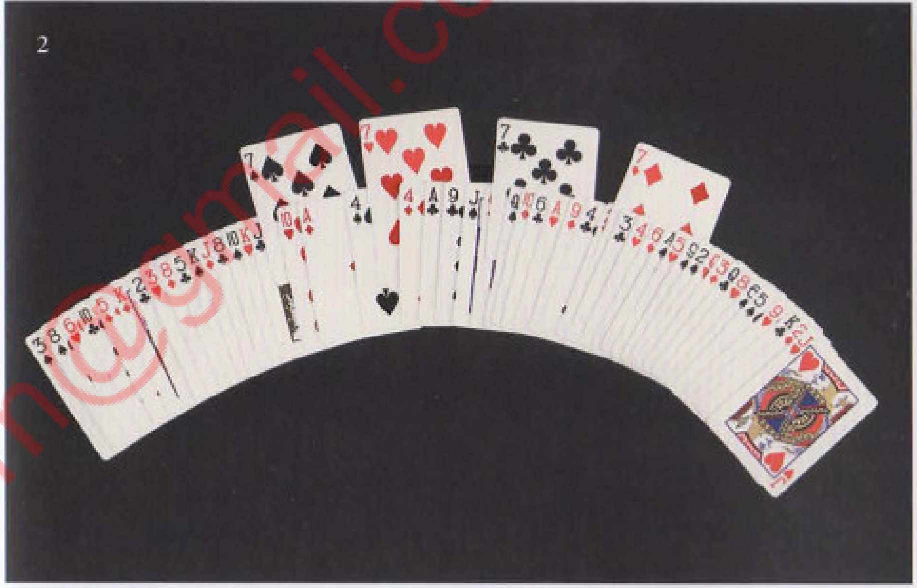
QUARTET-DISTANCES (TAMARIZ STACK)

Aces:	Diamonds (4, 8, 8)
Twos:	Hearts (8, 9, 8)
Threes:	Clubs (8, 9, 7)
Fours:	Spades (2, 11, 4)
Fives:	Hearts (8, 9, 5)
Sixes:	Clubs (8, 9, 8)
Sevens:	Spades (4, 6, 8)
Eights:	Hearts (8, 7, 4)
Nines:	Clubs (8, 9, 8)
Tens:	Clubs (10, 4, 11)
Jacks:	Hearts (12, 4, 9)
Queens:	Diamonds (2, 15, 2)
Kings:	Clubs (8, 5, 4)

---

[2] If you are using a different memorized order you will find it easy enough to jot down the appropriate list yourself: Just see which card has to be the first for every value and then count the distances for the other three.

[3] The list can easily be memorized in a day or two. May the effects in this chapter serve as motivation.



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QUARTET-DISTANCES (ARONSON STACK)

Aces:	Spades (4, 8, 4)
Twos:	Spades (10, 5, 9)
Threes:	Hearts (10, 7, 16)
Fours:	Hearts (2, 6, 8)
Fives:	Clubs (9, 8, 7)
Sixes:	Hearts (5, 5, 11)
Sevens:	Diamonds (4, 6, 3)
Eights:	Hearts (15, 7, 7)
Nines:	Hearts (5, 5, 5)
Tens:	Spades (21, 3, 3)
Jacks:	Clubs (1, 2, 17)
Queens:	Diamonds (5, 22, 2)
Kings:	Hearts (13, 11, 12)

By memorizing these bits of information for each value, you have in effect done most of the work in advance. During performance the process of controlling any named four-of-a-kind is quick, requires little thinking, and allows you to talk freely as you are doing it. In short, it has become practical.

Let's have a look at some applications, shall we?

Top of the Heaps

Top of the Heaps

This quick trick must be one of the simplest and most direct applications of the quartet concept. It is also very effective.

EFFECT

The performer briefly covers four small piles of cards with his hands. This causes the four cards of a freely named value to come to the top of the packets.

METHOD OVERVIEW

The deck is divided into packets in such a way that every packet has one card of the named value on top.

PERFORMANCE

While false shuffling the deck, ask a spectator to name any value. As soon as she does, cut the first card of that value[1] to the top[2] and immediately continue, as if you had forgotten something: *"Ah, we need some cards!"*

Recall the distance numbers for the named value. You will now make three separate packets, each with as many cards as indicated by the three distance numbers, followed by a fourth packet with any number of cards:

Suppose you are using the Tamariz stack and the spectator names the four Jacks. For the Jacks you recall *Hearts (12, 4, 9)* so you cut the Jack of Hearts to the top and thumb over twelve, four and nine cards, respectively, each time placing them onto the table in a separate packet. Continue with a fourth small packet of any number.

Needless to say, the forming of the packets should appear arbitrary – you simply spread over a few cards and place them onto the table.[3] To strengthen that impression, when you thumb over cards in small groups for the fourth packet, casually ask a spectator to say stop. When he does, say: *"Ok."* and drop the packet next to the other three. Place the reminder of the deck off to the side.

Turn to the spectator you had originally asked for a value and repeat the question, as if asking for the first time. You want to give the impression that this is when the trick officially begins. In fact, of course, everything is already done.[4]

After the spectator has named her chosen value again, it is time for the magic, represented by a magic gesture. Here's the one I use:

First, officially switch to performing mode by rubbing your palms together in a short gesture as if to say *"here we go."* Square and adjust the four piles a little as if to get ready. Eventually turn towards the spectators on your right and show your right hand empty saying: *"No Jack"* (Photo 1). Turn towards your left, show your left hand empty and repeat: *"No Jack."* Cover the left pile with your right hand and give the packet a little squeeze, holding your left hand next to it palm up (Photo 2). Slowly turn over both hands moving them one position to the right, uncovering the first packet with the right hand and newly covering it with the left (Photo 3). This sequence is repeated moving towards the right: Both hands turn again, the right hand covering the second pile while the left hand turns face up over the first packet, and so on. Both hands keep turning, covering and uncovering the packets like that, very slowly seesawing their way to the end of the row.

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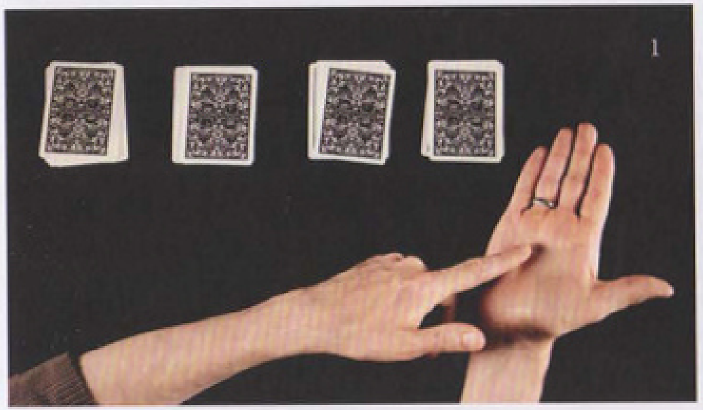
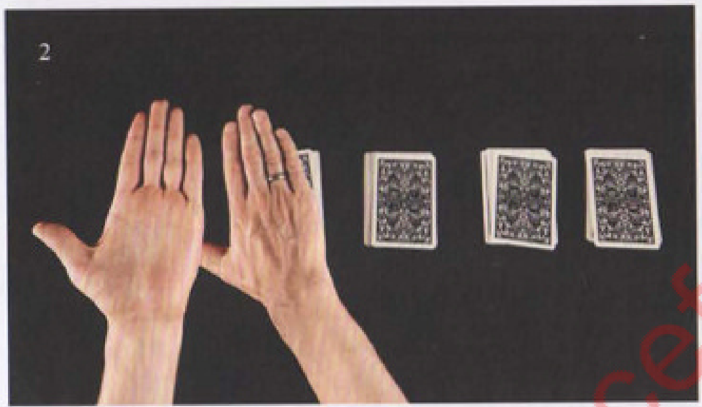
[1] See the introduction "Quartets" for what is meant by the "first" card of a named quartet.

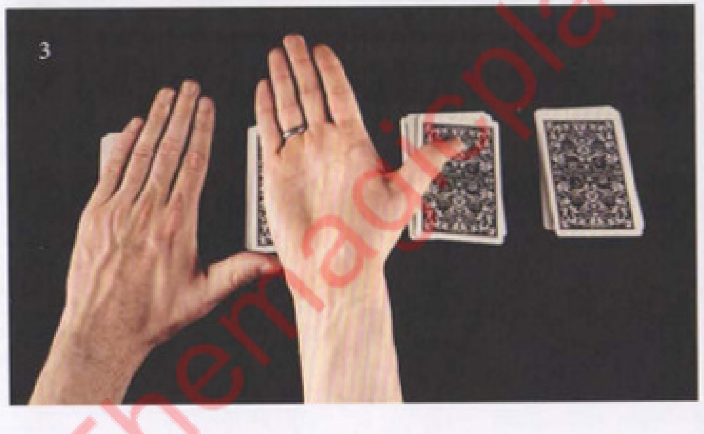
[2] "Cutting a Card to the Top" on page 56.

[3] See the first footnote in the introduction to this chapter.

[4] Pretending to have missed an answer and asking again after everything is done is an old strategy refined and masterfully used by Juan Tamariz. Done correctly (interrupting her original answer, seeming momentarily distracted, apparently not remembering what she said or even that you had asked before, etc.), there is no need to worry that the spectator might give a different answer. As is so often the case, experience will show how far you can go.







Pause for a moment and then turn over first one and then the other three top cards to reveal all four of the named value (Photo 4).

RETURNING HOME

To get back to memorized order simply turn the four cards back face down on top of their packets, place the packets together in original order and add everything to the rest of the deck. (I recommend placing the four packets together not one by one but two at a time with both hands simultaneously. If you do this somewhat quickly and a little sloppily and follow with a quick false shuffle it adds greatly to the impression that you just place the cards back together as they come, without caring about the order.[5])

COMMENTS

Because the method is quite linear, in this effect it is especially important that the spectators are convinced you are working with a shuffled deck. While a good false shuffle will probably do the job, you may want to consider preceding this with a short effect or procedure that involves genuinely changing the order of the cards and later leading back to the stack. Several examples can be found in the section "Finding The Way Home" in Denis Behr's *Handcrafted Card Magic* as well as in the writings of Juan Tamariz, Simon Aronson, Michael Close, Eric Mead and others (for specific sources see the bibliography at the end of this book). Suitable items in this book include "The Core", "Sherlock", "Duplicity" and others, depending on context.

Another element that helps to conceal the method is the (deliberately elaborate) magic gesture:

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[5] For further thoughts on this see also "Disorderly Conduct" in Eric Mead's excellent *Tangled Web* (Mead, 2006), page 87.

Magical Thinking – Magic Gestures and Causality

I have hinted at the importance of magic gestures before, but this trick seems a good case in point: If you made the four piles and simply turned over the top cards, the effect would be that you somehow managed to cut the deck at the named cards. Not only is this not particularly magical, it also leads directly to the method.

By inserting a somewhat longish and descriptive magic gesture, however, cause and effect can be separated – both temporally and conceptually. What's more, it automatically establishes a new (false) causation. Whenever we look for causal connections, our brains are hardwired to turn to whatever happened directly before. This is how the world works, after all: The child cries because it has fallen down.

A magic gesture effectively blocks the natural causal link: When the named cards are shown on top of the packets and the spectators backtrack to what happened directly before, they will hit upon the magic gesture. It will be this gesture that the spectators will involuntarily connect to the effect – false causality is ascribed to the laying on of hands, in this case.

Not only is this fiction much more magical, it also hides the true method by creating a false frame of reference: The question no longer is: *"How was he able to divide the deck at the right spots?"* but rather: *"How did those cards appear on top of the packets?"* [6]

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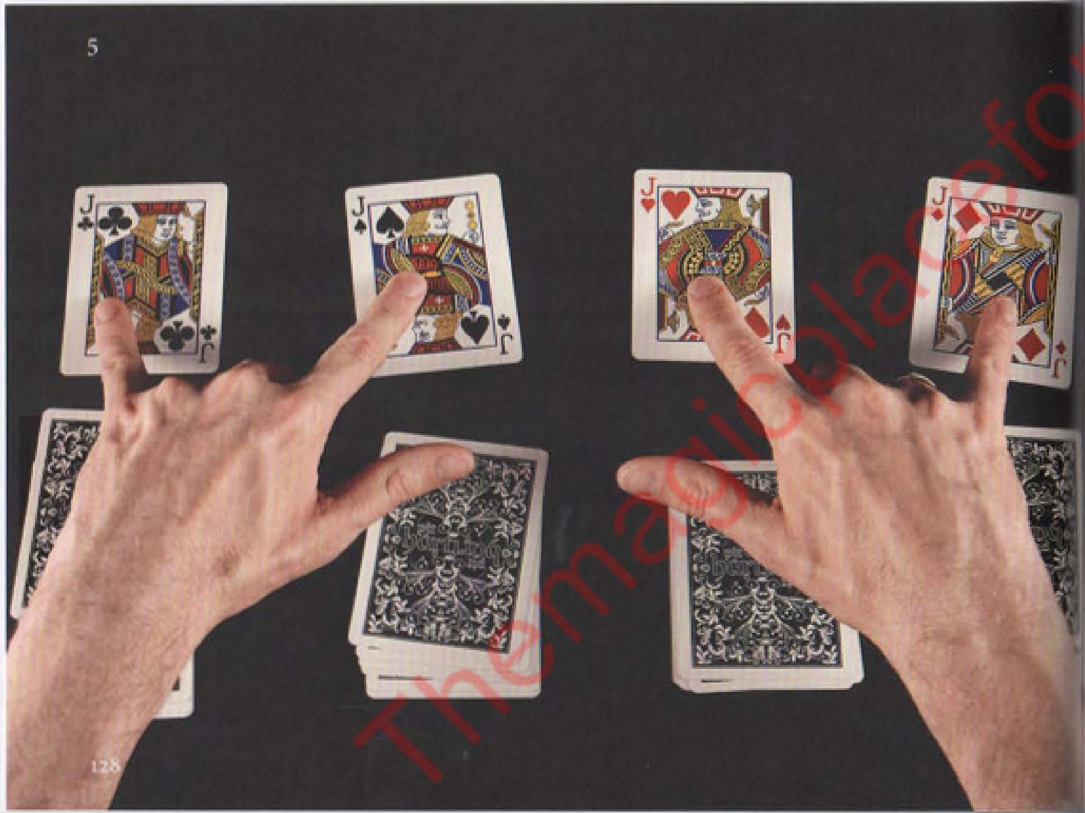

FURTHER IDEAS

The Jennings Revelation with a named quartet

"Top of the Heaps" may remind you of Larry Jennings' beautiful "Jennings Revelation" where four packets are briefly covered with the hands and four cards appear face up on top of the piles.[7] The Quartet concept makes it possible to perform that classic with a named four-of-a-kind.[8] Here's one possible handling:

Ask for a value and form the four packets as described. Immediately move the top card of the second pile onto the first pile and the top card of the third pile onto the fourth. In others words, the top cards of the inner piles are placed on top of the outer piles. This is an open action and should appear like an unimportant little adjustment.[9]

You will now briefly show the top and bottom cards of each pile as if to check that there are none of the named number: Pick up packet number one and do a triple turnover. Leaving that "top card" face up, turn over the whole packet to show the bottom card. With the packet still face up, reach underneath, slide out the bottom card, turn it face up and replace it under the packet. Place the packet back face down.[10]

Repeat the same with the other packets, omitting the Triple Turnover with the second and third piles but using it again with the fourth. During the sequence you may simply comment something like: *"No Nine on top, no Nine on the bottom… Same here, ok…"*, etc.[11] You are now ready to perform the *Jennings Revelation* with the named quartet.

Returning Home from The Jennings Revelation

After the four cards have appeared, slide them off the packets with both hands (Photo 5). You will now briefly pick up the four cards to display them and return them to

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[6] For more on causality and its relevance to conjuring see chapter three in Darwin Ortiz' *Designing Miracles* (2006).

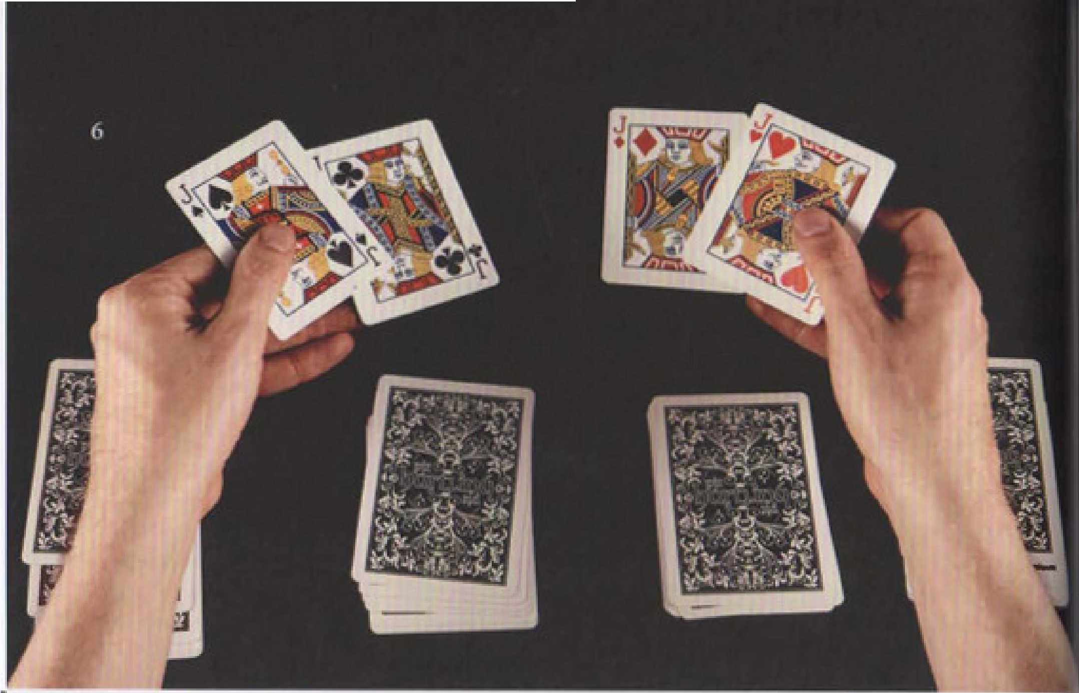
[7] "The Jennings Revelation" in *The Classic Magic of Larry Jennings*, (Maxwell, 1986), page 71.

[8] Depending on the distribution of the quartets in your stack, the choice may actually be restricted: If the first of the three distance numbers is less than three the described handling will not work. (This is the case for the Fours and Queens in the Tamariz stack or the Fours and Jacks in the Aronson stack, for example.) There are two solutions to this: You can either rearrange the cards a little to make it work (usually exchanging two neighboring cards is all that's needed) or you can verbally exclude the "bad" values: Asking for *"a number between one and ten"* excludes the Aces, Tens, Jacks, Queens and Kings, and any additional number can easily be avoided by naming it yourself as an example.

[9] If you prefer, you can include one or even both these corrections already during the forming of the packets: After placing down the first packet, simply add one single card on top and continue as usual, but taking one less card for the second packet. For the second correction, when placing down the third packet, slide the top card back on top of the deck before making the last pile.

[10] This reverse goes back to Dr. Daley, see "The Itinerant Pasteboards" in *Stars of Magic* (Tannen, 1961), page 107.

[11] Needless to say, these actions should be treated as mere preliminaries. The whole sequence is done in non-performing mode.



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the table in a different order: Take the outer two cards and slide them under the middle two to pick them up easily. Wiggle the two cards in each hand together a bit and return them to the table placing the bottom cards of each hand in the middle positions and the other two at the outer positions (Photo 6). This has exchanged the inner with the outer two cards.

Place the top cards of the two inner piles on top of the outer two (caution: This is the same as you did before – resist the habit of doing the opposite, as is usually the case when "returning home").

Replace the four face-up cards onto their packets face down, assemble the packets in their original order and add everything to the rest of the deck.

A Riffle Culling Demonstration

Finally, the method of "Top of the Heaps" can also be used to simulate a riffle cull: Apparently, you will be locating and controlling a named quartet in the process of a series of riffle shuffles. Actually, the whole thing is a bluff. In the right situations, it can be quite effective.

For this, form the four packets as described *making sure to go from right to left* and shuffle them together using Zarrow Shuffles:[12] Shuffle the first two packets together, followed by the other two, then the combined packets (shuffling one under the top two cards of the other), and finally everything with the rest of the deck (shuffling the latter under the top four cards). You will be left with the deck in memorized order, except for the named four-of-a-kind which you can reveal on top.

I found it gives a good rhythm if during each of the four shuffles you name one of the four cards (the card you are controlling at that moment, seemingly) and then reveal the four cards on top one at a time, repeating their names in the same order.

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[12] I actually use Double Cover Zarrows for the first three shuffles: Instead of shuffling all the cards from the right packet under the top card of the left, leave one card from the right packet on top of everything. (In the third shuffle, leave two cards.) The Double Cover Zarrow (as well as everything you always wanted to know about the Zarrow Shuffle but were afraid to ask) can be found in *Zarrow* (Ben, 2008); see "The Double Cover Zarrow" on page 405.

Murphy's Law

Murphy's Law

Here is another very direct application of the Quartet principle. This is an amusing trick, almost a kind of magical joke, and at the same time it is quite amazing.

It is also an example of framing a simple effect with a presentation that makes it personal and meaningful (even if in a somewhat mischievous way, as you will see).

EFFECT

The performer mentions that playing cards stem from the *"ancient Tarot"* and some of the *"mysterious qualities"* are still inherent in modern-day decks. Specifically, he informs, a deck of cards can be used to tell how lucky – or indeed, unlucky – a person is.

To demonstrate, a spectator names any value from Ace to King and deals through the deck, turning the cards face up one by one. The earlier a card of his chosen value appears, the luckier he is. The spectator turns out to be a tragic case: The cards of his freely named value happen to be the four very last cards in the deck.

METHOD OVERVIEW

The four cards of the named value are brought to the bottom of the deck with a face-down spread cull.

PERFORMANCE

Mention that a regular deck of cards can be used to test someone's luck and offer to demonstrate. Look around the audience and say: *"So, who is the luckiest person in the group? Or wait! Better the unluckiest. Much more interesting!"* This can create quite a funny situation, especially in groups where most people know each other.

"It's the little things.", you continue, *"At the checkout your line is always the slowest. When trying-out keys the right one is always the last. Does that happen to anyone? Who is the unluckiest guy in the group?"* Wait for someone to play along and "admit" he is suffering from constant bad luck only to comically exaggerate his "condition": *"Oh yes, I can actually tell just by looking at you. It must be really hard!"*, etc.

To test your subject's luck, have the spectator name any value from Ace to King. Suppose he says Seven.

"The test is quite simple", you explain: *"You said Seven, so you turn the cards face up one by one until you come to a Seven."* Illustrate what you want him to do with a gesture, without actually turning any cards face up. *"Sometimes"*, you continue, *"it may be the first or second card, sometimes it will take a little longer. But sooner or later you will come to a card of your number."*

During this short speech you casually spread through the face-down deck to illustrate your words and secretly bring the quartet of the named number to the bottom of the deck. It all takes just a few seconds. Here's the procedure:

When the spectator names his number, cut the first card of that quartet to the face of the deck. (Assuming, for example, that you are using the Tamariz stack this would be the Seven of Spades.) The distance numbers for the Sevens in the Tamariz stack are (4,6,8), so as you spread through the deck, use a spread cull to take the fourth card, then the sixth card from that spot and finally the eighth card from there under the spread. When you square the deck, the four Sevens will be on the bottom. Place the deck onto the table.

Finish by explaining: *"And of course, the earlier one of your cards appears the luckier you are."*

Then the test officially begins: Have the spectator pick up the deck and slowly deal through, turning the cards face up one by one until he comes to a Seven. After he has dealt the first few cards, briefly talk to the other spectators before turning back to him. Noticing he hasn't stopped yet, remind him: *"Oh, but when you come to one of your number, you are supposed to stop."* He will inform you that, so far, no Seven has turned up.

As he continues, comment on his increasing bad luck (*"Still no Seven? I can't believe it! I am so sorry!"*). It can be quite amusing to point out other cards close to the named value as they go by (*"Look, if you had said* *six, there would have been one right there!"*). Another nice bit is to stop the spectator at some point and dramatically have him turn over the next card, only to find just another indifferent card (*"Oh well. I thought it might have been a Seven"*).

As the dealing goes on without any of the named value in sight, it will become increasingly funny. Of course, it will be clear that your little "test" is not as innocent as it appears, but at the same time what exactly happened to the named cards will be quite a mystery. (Many spectators will jump to the conclusion that the named value is not in the deck at all. Don't worry – they are in for a surprise.)

When the spectator nears the end, it is time for you to pay close attention: You want to stop him when he has exactly four cards left. As you know the order of the cards, this is easy: Just recall the first card of the named value again (the card you cut to the bottom at the beginning, the Seven of Spades in our example) and stop the spectator right before that card.

Say: *"Wait! How many cards do you have left?"* After checking he will say: *"Four."* This is a nice little moment that helps to foreshadow and dramatize the climax. To conclude, have him show the last four cards: They are exactly the ones of his freely chosen value. Tough luck!

RETURNING HOME

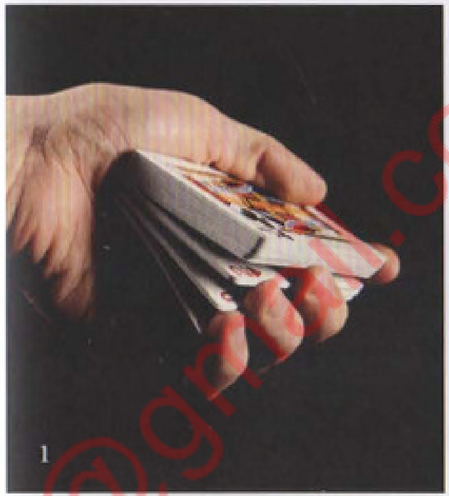
To restore memorized order, the four cards of the named value need to be replaced in their proper positions. The best handling I know for this is Denis Behr's "Plop Replacement" from his book *Handcrafted Card Magic 2*. I thank Denis for letting me describe it here again (all it took was a beer).

Denis Behr's "Plop Replacement"

Basically, this consists of establishing breaks at the positions where the cards belong and then slipping the cards into those spots using slip cuts.

If you have just performed "Murphy's Law" the first of the four cards (the one on the back) will belong on the face of the deck. (If you want to use this replacement coming from some other situation, first cut the deck accordingly.)

Hold the deck face up in left-hand dealing position and spread almost all the cards over into the right. With the right fingers then back-spread the cards from the bottom of the deck into the left hand until you come to the first position where one of the four cards is missing. At that spot, take a left little-finger break. Back-spread a few more cards from under the deck into the left hand until you come to the spot where the next card is missing. At this position, take a break with your left third finger. Finally, keep spreading further and take a final break with the left second finger where the next card belongs (Photo 1 shows all three breaks).[1]



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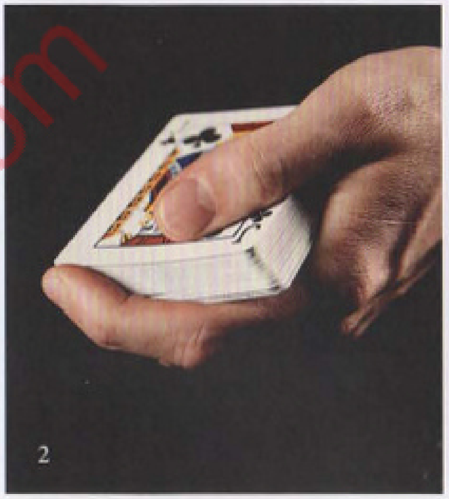

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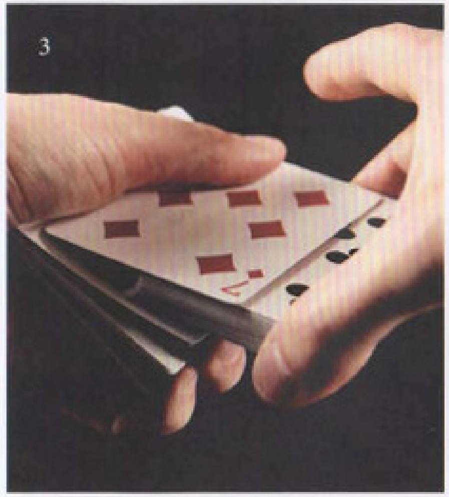
At first, holding all these breaks will probably not feel very comfortable, but if you try it a few times, you will quickly become used to it. The position is held only for a moment, and if you tilt the right long side of the deck downwards a little, everything is quite well hidden (Photo 2 shows the same situation from the front). Also, all of this is done in the relaxation after the effect, so there will be very little attention on your actions, anyway.

Pick up the four cards from the table and place them onto the deck, also face up. (If you have previously culled the four cards as described, they will still be in the order that they originally came from the deck. Again, if you want to do this coming from some other position, put the four cards in the right order first.)

Execute a slip cut, pulling the card from the face of the deck into the top break with the left thumb as the right hand cuts off the packet above that break (Photo 3). Slap the cut-off packet back onto the deck and drop the second-finger break – it is no longer needed.

Repeat this action twice, slip-cutting the next card into the third- and the last into



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[1] To quickly find the places where the cards are missing without having to go through the stack card for card, you can use the distance numbers again: The places to take the breaks will be at those numbers.

the little-finger break, each time losing the break afterwards. To lose the fourth card, just give the deck a regular swing cut. All four cards are now back at their positions in the memorized deck.

COMMENTS

Culling any quartet from a face-down deck

I strongly urge you to try the culling of any quartet and give it the time and practice it deserves. Once mastered, it will open the door to several effects, of which "Murphy's Law" is only the very simplest. (Another one is the "original" application of the Quartet concept, Denis Behr's wonderful (and aptly titled) "Plop".[2] Two more can be found elsewhere in this book.[3])

The spectator (false) cuts the deck before the deal

Here is an idea you may want to add: In appearance, the spectator gives the deck a triple cut before dealing through the cards. In fact you guide him through the actions of the Jay Ose False Cut:[4]

When ready to begin the test, tell the spectator that he will first "mix the cards a little bit": Ask him to cut off about a third of the deck and place that packet in front of him a bit towards the left. He then takes about half of the remaining cards and places them to the right of the first packet. Finally, he places the rest of the deck to the right of the first two packets. Ask him to pick up the packet on the left and place it onto the middle one, and then the combined packet onto the one on the right, completing the deck. If you try this with cards in hand, you will find it feels amazingly like a real triple cut. In fact, of course, the order of the cards remains unchanged and you are ready to continue as described.[5]

Mental Snapshots

I'd like to take the opportunity and single out one moment in this trick to briefly talk about mental images:

When I first started doing this trick, I brought the named quartet to the bottom as described and then simply handed the deck to the spectator to deal through. While there is nothing terribly wrong with this, it does leave the audience with the image – the "mental snapshot" if you will – of the performer handing the spectator the cards directly before the deal. The spectator literally deals what the performer hands him.

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[2] See *Handcrafted Card Magic*, (Behr, 2007), page 20.

[3] See "The Chosen" on page 140 and "The Illusionist" on page 160.

[4] The Ose Cut was first described in *Close-Up Card Magic* (Lorayne, 1962), page 93. It can also be found as "A Triple False Cut" in *Card College* (Giobbi, 1994), page 60.

[5] The idea of having a spectator unwittingly execute the Jay Ose Cut can also be found in Paul Harris' *The Art of Astonishment Volume 3* (1996) on page 300 as part of Chad Long's wonderful "Shuffling Lesson". For a multitude of complete effects that the spectators execute in their own hands, only guided by the performer's voice, see Juan Tamariz's groundbreaking work *Por Arte de Verbimagia* (Tamariz, Navarro, 2005) also available in English as *Verbal Magic* (Tamariz, Minch, Benatar, 2008).

[6] Incidentally, this once more confirms the general rule of thumb that it is usually a good idea to place the deck down whenever possible instead of holding it in your hands all the time.

Compare this to the handling described above: With the four cards secretly brought to the bottom, the deck is momentarily placed onto the table. A few moments pass and the spectator picks up the deck from there to start dealing. This way, the last "snapshot" before the deal is the spectator taking the deck from the table. The performer is not "part of the picture", making it that much easier for the audience to forget that he briefly handled the cards earlier.[6]

Ideally, the spectators' recollection of an effect should consist of a series of mental snapshots that were specifically created and selected by the performer for that very purpose.

Someone who keeps pointing out the importance of these kinds of "images" and using them to shape the spectators' memories is Juan Tamariz. The first I heard to call them "Mental Snapshots" was Roberto Giobbi.

The Emotional Hook

In itself, I believe, the effect of "Murphy's Law" is strong, but not particularly meaningful: The cards of a named value happen to be the last cards in the deck. Why should anybody care? As Juan Tamariz keeps reminding us: Magic is supposed to be impossible and fascinating.

What turns the rather abstract effect into a memorable piece of magic is the notion of testing someone's luck: By linking the positions of the cards to a spectator's personal (mis)fortune, it is no longer about the cards, it is about people. And suddenly, we care.

About the plot and presentation

I am usually quite wary of presentations about personal "success" and "good fortune". All too often, they include cheesy self-help slogans along the lines of *"anything is possible if you just follow your dreams"* (cue violins), and this is usually more than my gag-reflex can comfortably handle.[7]

"Murphy's Law" cunningly sidesteps that problem by heaping loads of bad luck onto the spectator and leaving it at that (call it German humour).[8]

That said, here's a word of caution: We are strange creatures. Even with the most comically exaggerated presentation and the clearest understanding that it's all just a silly little joke, the notion of being unlucky or even "cursed" can become impressed quite deeply. While I do indeed leave it at that for a little while, I make a point of always following "Murphy's Law" with an effect that allegedly "heals" the spectator from his "bad luck", thus providing a powerful counter-curse.[9]

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[7] I am talking about making those topics *explicit*. Symbolically, the subject of luck and its domination is, of course, at the very heart of pretty much all gambling-related plots and several magic effects as well.

[8] Or maybe Spanish humour: In one of his effects, Juan Tamariz uses a similar presentation where he marvels at a spectator's alleged extreme bad luck before making good by magically changing some selected "testing" cards.

[9] For smaller groups I use "The Chosen", the next trick in this book; for somewhat larger groups "Four-Way Stop" on page 168.

The Chosen

The Chosen

By use of the Quartet principle the classic "Spectator-finds-the-Aces" is expanded to "Spectator-finds-any-named-four-of-a-kind". The application is quite a natural one, as you will see, and makes for a remarkable effect. This trick is also the ideal follow-up to "Murphy's Law".

EFFECT

A spectator freely touches any four cards in the deck. By some fantastic stroke of luck he managed to find exactly the four cards of a freely named value.

METHOD OVERVIEW

The named quartet is culled under the spread and switched in for the four cards that the spectator actually touched.

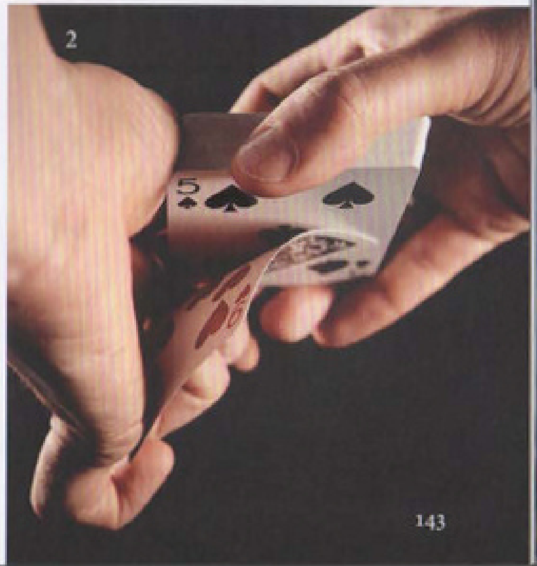
PERFORMANCE

If you use this effect as a follow-up for "Murphy's Law", open by informing your hapless spectator that his bad luck can be remedied. Offer to guide him through this life-changing ritual – for free!

Ask the spectator for the month he was born. The months correspond to the values in the deck: February is two, September nine and so on (November are the Jacks, December would be the four Queens). When he names the month, cut the first card of the corresponding quartet to the top of the deck.

Tell your spectator that all it takes to be cured from his misfortune is *"to touch someone who is always lucky."* Pause a beat and then offer him your arm to touch (Photo 1). This should get a laugh. When he touches you, ask him whether he can already feel anything, and generally make the most out of the situation. It can all be quite amusing.

During your little banter with the spectator use a half pass to secretly turn the bottom card of the deck face up (Photo 2).[1] Immediately follow by cutting the bottom five cards to the top. (After the half pass I use a double buckle to take a break above the bottom two cards and then use the left fingers to "smear" the next three cards out



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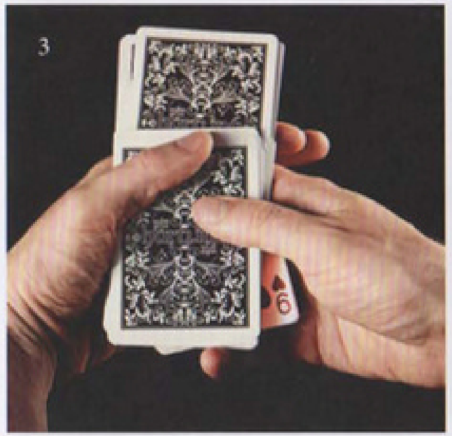
[1] I use the "Christ Twist" at this point, an explanation of which can be found in *Card College*, Vol 4, (Giobbi, 2000), page 988.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to the left, cutting everything to the top. See also "Cutting a card to the top", specifically the second photograph, page 57.)

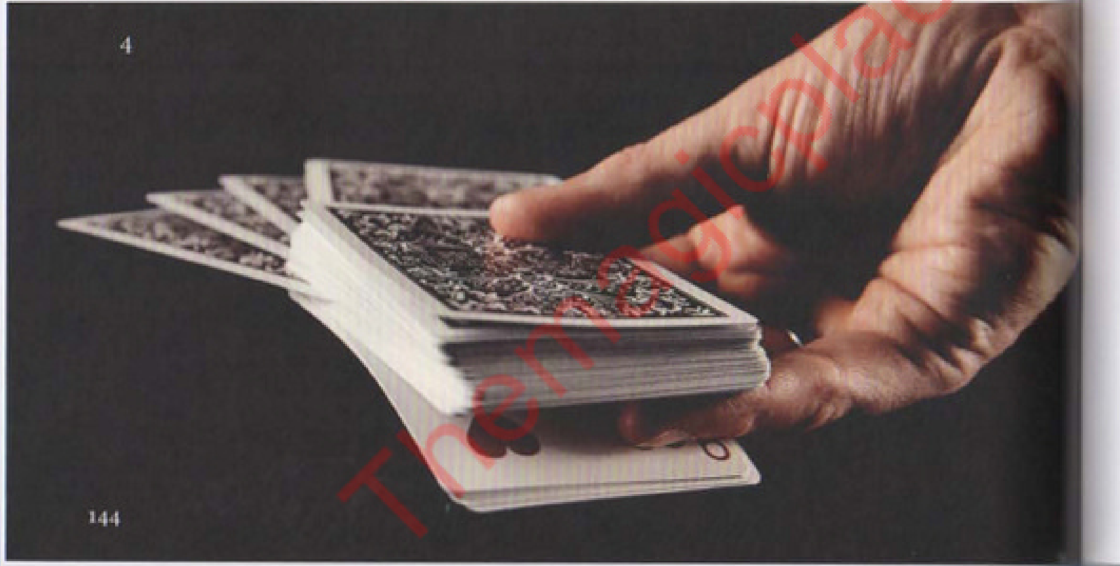
Situation check: The fifth card from the top is secretly face up and the next card is the first of the spectator's named month/value.

Spread the first three cards singly, and on the fourth execute a double push off, allowing you to cull the reversed card under the spread. Immediately cull the next card as well (the first card of the named quartet).

Keep spreading through the deck and cull the remaining three cards of the named month as described in detail in "Murphy's Law" on page 135. During this, explain the rules of the ritual: The spectator is to touch any four cards. If at least one of the four is one of his month, the ritual was a success and he is officially "healed".

With the four cards of the named month (and one extra reversed card) safely under the spread, have the spectator freely touch any four cards. Outjog each card as he selects them, emphasizing the freedom of his choices.

When you have outjogged his last selection, briefly turn the left hand palm down to show the faces of the remaining few cards, commenting that he could have touched any of these (if you have performed "Murphy's Law" before, you can even jokingly comment that they are *"not the last four"*). Above all, this is a very open gesture that inconspicuously shows that nothing is hidden and all is as it should be.[2]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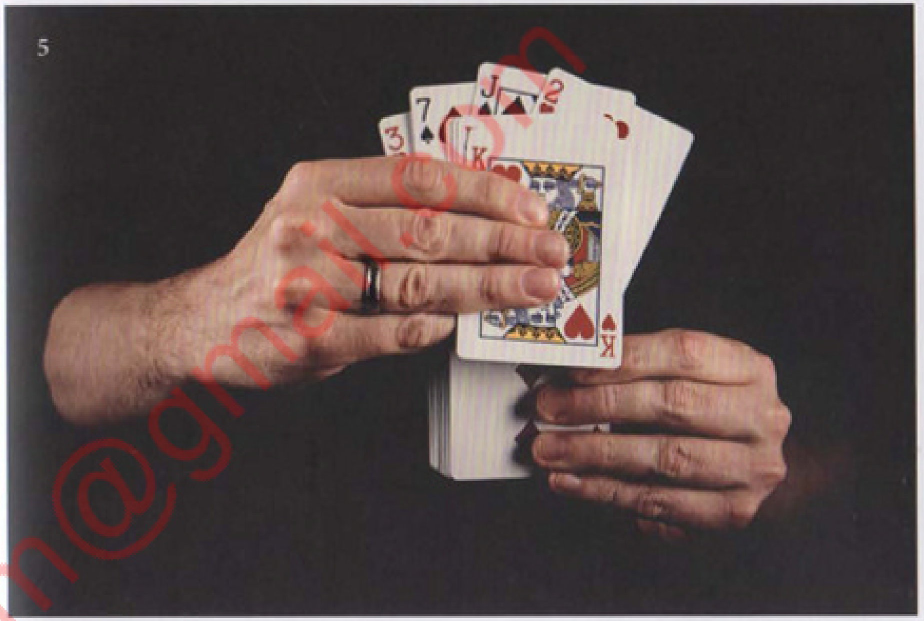
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Push everything together into the left hand, twisting the five-card packet from under the spread a little counter-clockwise, so its bottom right corner protrudes slightly from the deck (Photo 3). This allows you easily to take a break above the packet with your left fourth finger.

Use the right hand to spread the four outjogged cards a bit. You will now execute Dai Vernon's second refined handling of his own strip-out addition[3]: Pull down with the left fourth finger on the packet below the break. Enter this break with the right fourth finger as you grip the deck with the right hand thumb on top and fingers below (this is the Vernon Wedge Break (Photo 4)).

After a gesture with the left hand regrip the deck with the left hand again, thumb above and fingers underneath, the fingers entering the break at the left inner corner of the deck. This frees the right hand, so you can move it forward, sliding the clipped packet with it under the deck (Photo 5, seen from

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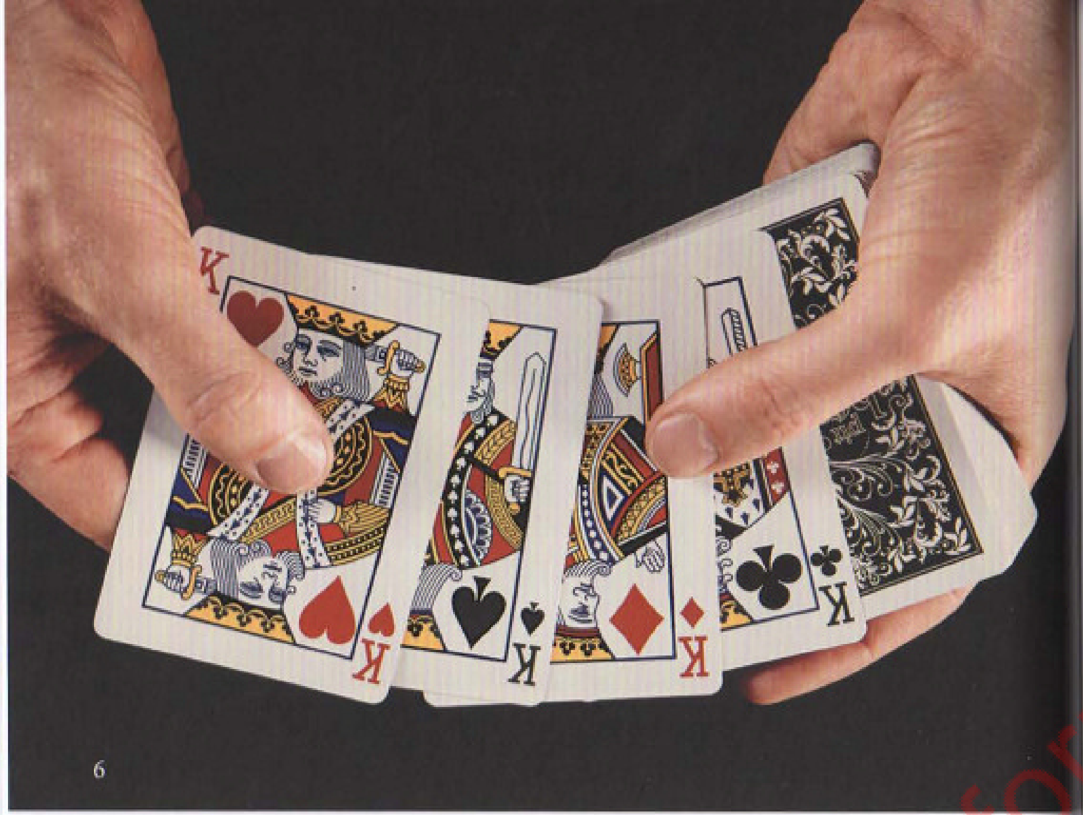
[2] They say "don't run if no one is chasing you", but sometimes a little exercise is quite healthy.

[3] Vernon first published the strip-out addition as part of "The Vernon Card Puzzle" on page 13 of his "$20 Manuscript" (*Ten Card Problems*, Vernon, 1932). A detailed description of the handling mentioned here can be found in the Vernon Chronicles *The Lost Inner Secrets* Vol I (Minch, 1987) on page 82.



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below). In a continuous action, the right hand strips out the outjogged cards adding the hidden packet beneath them.

Tap the left side of the packet against the deck to square everything and turn the whole packet face up onto the deck. A card of the named month will show on the face of the packet.

Spread the top four cards to show that, apparently, the spectator has touched exactly the four cards of his birth month – that lucky devil! (Photo 6). Place the four cards face up onto the table to end.

RETURNING HOME

"The Chosen" holds the dubious honour for being the trick in the book with the most cards to be replaced to their positions: A total of eight cards need to be put back where they belong. It feels like having had a great meal and now having to do the dishes. Here's how I usually take care of that in a few simple steps: Fill the sink with hot water and add a small amount of dish liquid. Put plates and cutlery into the water and get a good brush or washcloth. Scrub until clean.

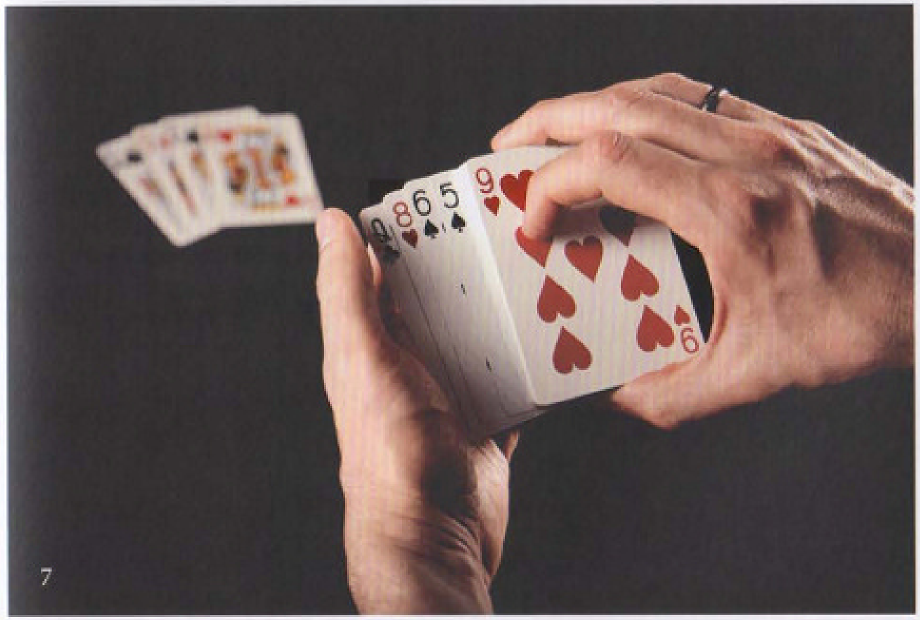
Now for the cards: The named four-of-a-kind is left on the table for the moment. We will start with the four face-up cards under the top card of the deck: Momentarily hold the top five cards in end grip with your right hand and turn the rest of the deck face up underneath. Place the packet from the right hand on top of the deck. Turn the top card face up and slip cut it to fifth position from the bottom (you can use the left fingers to backspread the bottom four cards a bit to facilitate this, Photo 7).

Continue to hold the deck in left-hand dealing position with the right hand over it in end grip. Spread to the position where the card on the face of the deck belongs, hold a break at that spot and slip the card from the face in there with the left thumb. Immediately spread to the next position and repeat with the next three cards.

Finally, cut (or lift shuffle) five cards from the back of the deck to the face and put the quartet from the table back to their positions using Denis Behr's "Plop Replacement" (see "Murphy's Law" on page 136).

COMMENTS

"Spectator-finds-the-Aces" is a classic plot and there are many handlings in print.[4] As far as I know, however, "The Chosen" is one of very few versions that allows the effect to be performed with a named quartet (actually, I am not currently aware of any other such version, but I can already feel Marlo's



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[4] One of the earliest uses of a strip-out addition for a Spectator-finds-the-Aces kind of effect may be Audley Walsh's "Novel Beginning for a Four Ace Trick" from *Card Manipulations, Issue 5* (Hugard 1936), page 156.

shadow looming over me, so I'd better be careful).

Either way, note that even with the "any quartet" feature, the procedure remains quite direct: A four-of-a-kind is named, the deck is spread face down and four cards are freely touched. There are hardly any preliminaries. This is possible because the additional secret action (culling the named quartet) is part of – or at least flows seamlessly into – the selection procedure.

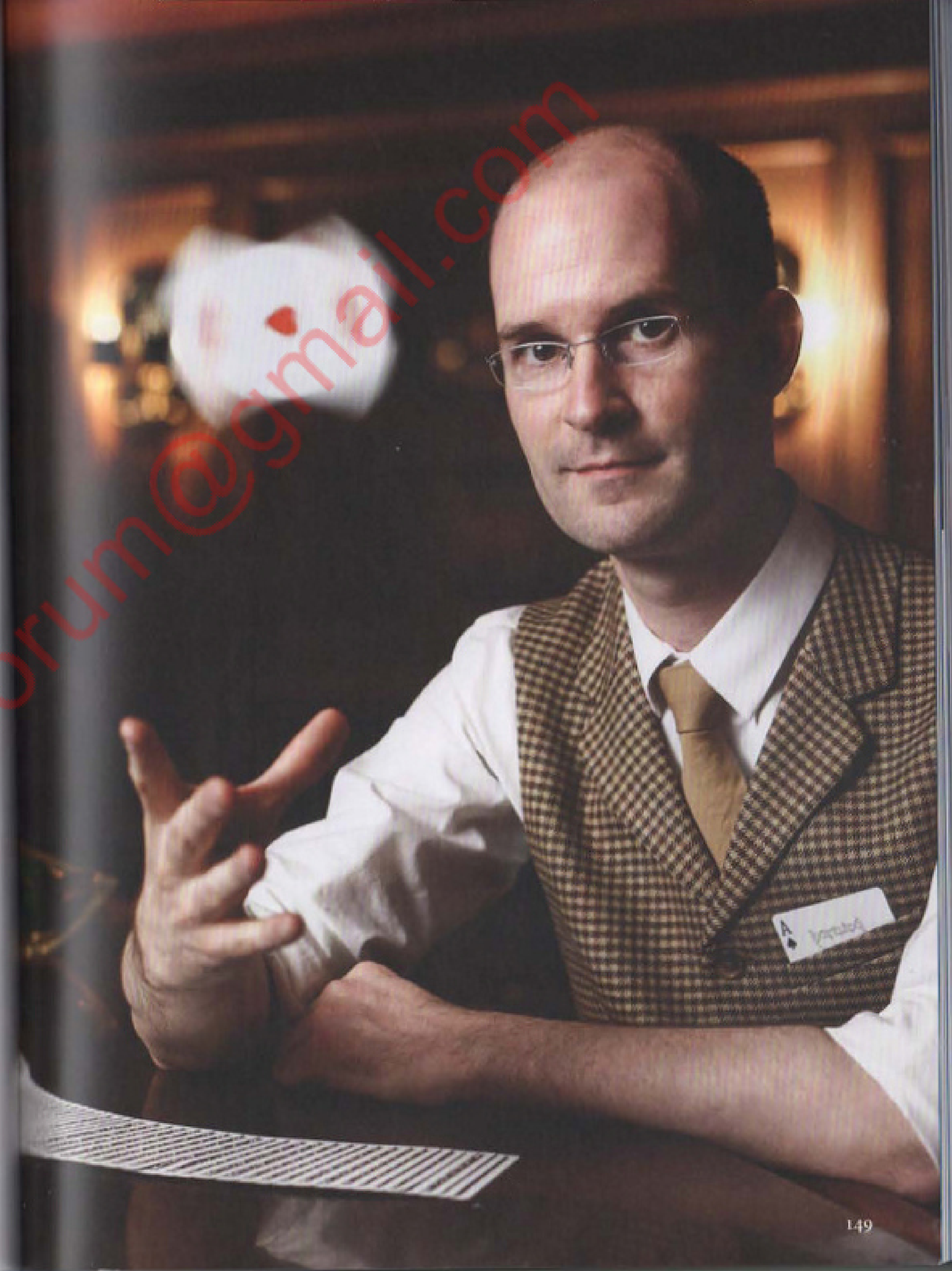
On free choices

Talking about the selection procedure – as far as the audience is concerned, this is the central part of the trick. I usually make a point of telling the spectator that he can select any cards he wants, but as soon as he touches one, he must stick to it. There is no going back. This really means nothing, of course, but it emphasizes the freedom and also dramatizes the selection process. Note that I do not offer the spectator to change his mind. I believe an overly carefree attitude is unfitting in contexts like this and can even weaken the effect: If the performer obviously doesn't care what the spectator is doing, this only implies that it makes no difference (because there is going to be some cheating later on, anyway). I prefer to give the impression that the spectator's choices do matter.

While the strip-out addition switch has to take pretty much all the heat I nevertheless advise against directing attention away from your hands too much at that moment. The switch is convincing enough to be looked at, and showing that nothing is under the deck before the switch and spreading the four cards off the deck immediately afterwards (the reversed extra card covering the switched-out cards) makes it all appear quite fair. The last thing you want is to "misdirect" away from it, only to be accused later of having done something quickly, when they "weren't looking".

Asking for a spectator's birth month instead of a value from Ace to King is a strategy often used by Juan Tamariz. Apart from buying time as you explain how the months correspond with the different values (and where necessary use the opportunity to secretly cull, count, locate or arrange cards as you see fit), it also makes everything more personal.

This latter aspect is particularly welcome when using "The Chosen" as a follow-up (and "counter-curse") to "Murphy's Law": To the spectator, his birth month feels like a part of him, which gives it more weight, emotionally, than just a random number (as used in "Murphy's Law"). When he finally gets lucky, it feels like this was the "real" number, and the "unlucky" value from before didn't really count. (Of course, if his birth month is the same as his previously named value he really is a poor bastard!)



Identity

Identity

Memorized-deck magic does not have a reputation for being overly visual. There are a few exceptions, and this is one of them: A triple back-and-forth change of four indifferent cards into a named quartet.

EFFECT

Announcing he will find the four cards of a named value just by touch, the performer one by one turns four cards face up at different positions in the deck. Even though the four are just random, indifferent cards, each time the performer confidently claims to have found one of the named value.

Just when spectators start exchanging glances and doubting the performer's mental stability, they can suddenly see for themselves: When the deck is spread on the table, the four face-up cards instantly transform into the named four-of-a-kind. Before anybody can say "optometrist", the four cards change back to their former appearance – and back again to the named quartet!

METHOD OVERVIEW

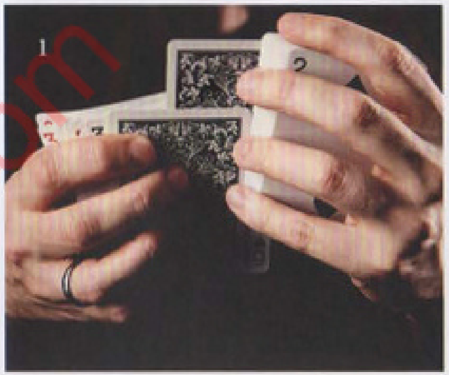
The changes are brought about by combinations of double lifts and the ribbon spread hideout.

PERFORMANCE

"I have had people say: 'This is not magic, it is all just optical illusion!' And it's true, optical illusions can occur. But mostly, it is a real skill. For example, I can locate cards just by feel."

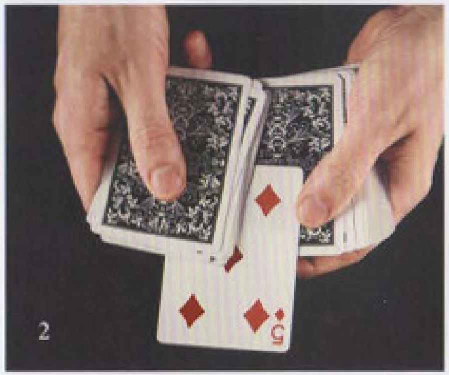
After this introduction, ask somebody to name any value. Suppose he or she names the Tens.

Cut the deck to bring the first Ten to within the top quarter of the deck or so (a glance at the bottom card will tell you the exact position). Spread through the face-down deck until you come to that first Ten and execute a double turnover turning over the Ten and the next card as one.[1] An indifferent card will show, and you proudly call it the first Ten. (In the case of the Tamariz stack you would show the Five of Diamonds and call it the Ten of Clubs. In the Aronson stack, the Five of Hearts will show and you call it the Ten of Spades.)



Push both cards as one over to the right a bit and with the right fingers pull the bottom card of the two (the Ten) under the spread (Photo 1). Immediately move the left hand forwards, taking the face-up indifferent card with it, and then back again, leaving the card outjogged for about half its length (Photo 2). All the time, the Ten remains at its original position in the deck, but now sidejogged to the right and thus hidden from the top.

Without much pause, spread to the next Ten. (As usual, the distance numbers allow you to "jump" directly to the right spot without having to mentally recite the order. I find it helpful to think of the double card as the last two of the count; that is, if



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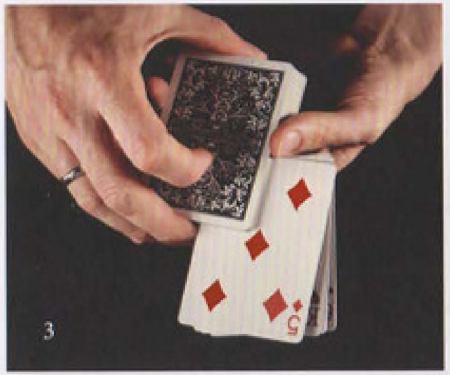
[1] There are quite a number of double-turnovers in this routine. It is recommended to use a push-off technique. This allows for a certain tempo and flow which would be difficult to achieve if a break needed to be established before each turnover. For an excellent description of a push-off double lift see *Card College Vol. 3* (Giobbi, 1998), page 573 and Andi Gladwin's detailed DVD on the subject, *The Master Pushoff* (2010).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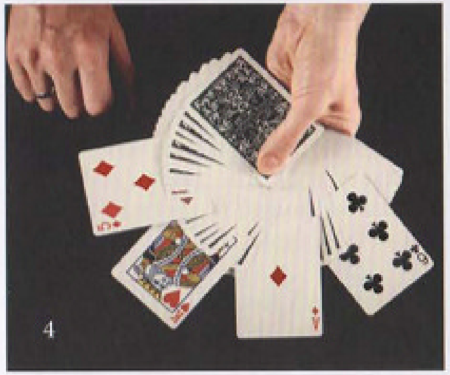
the distance number is 10, for example, I count eight cards and then do the double turnover, counting the double as "nine" and "ten".) When you reach that second Ten repeat the exact same handling: Turn over a double (showing the King of Hearts and calling it the Ten of Spades in our example) and outjog the King while pulling the Ten to the right under the spread. Repeat the same handling twice more with the remaining two Tens.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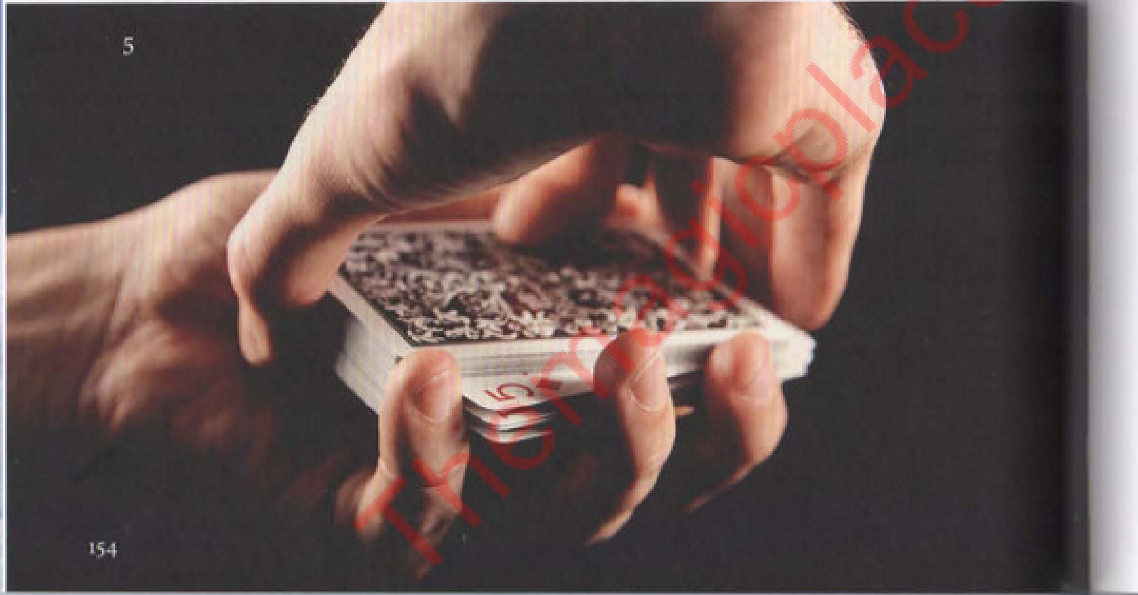
Eventually, you will have four face-up cards outjogged from the deck with a card of the named value hidden under each of them. Square the long sides of the deck without disturbing the outjogged cards, and move them a bit towards the left to reach the position shown in Photo 3. Fan the deck and point to each of the four face-up cards in turn repeating with an air of achievement: *"Ten of Clubs, Ten of Spades, Ten of Hearts and Ten of Diamonds!"* (Photo 4). Look at your audience expectantly.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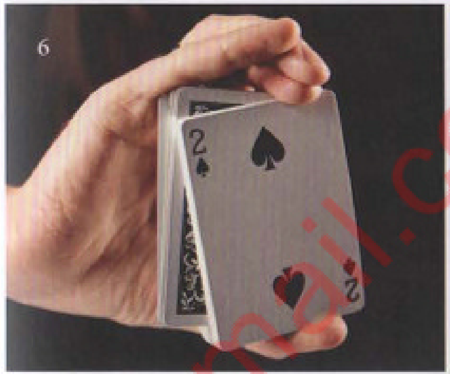
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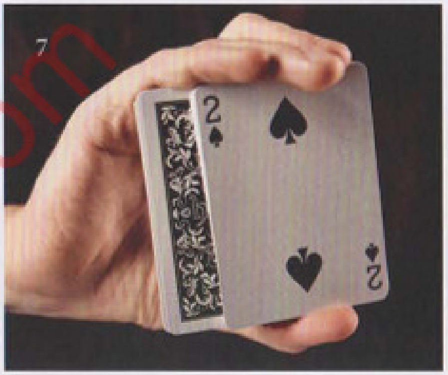
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Confusion, amusement, pity and disgust are all perfectly acceptable reactions at this point.

Noticing a certain lack of enthusiasm it suddenly occurs to you what seems to be the problem. *"Oh! You don't see the Tens? Ah, yes. You see, that's an optical illusion!"* This explanation refers back to the beginning of course, and is usually greeted with sneers. But, completely unperturbed, you continue: *"To some people this one probably looks a bit like a Five!?"* Knowingly point to the next card and say: *"Does the Ten of Spades appear like a picture card? A Queen or King maybe? Yes, I've heard that before. I think it has to do with the lighting."*

Eventually, when you feel the moment is right, say: *"Sometimes, it helps just to place them on the table."* As you say this, spread the deck on the table and the four face-up cards will instantly transform into the four Tens, courtesy of the ribbon spread hideout.[2] Here's the handling for this first change:

Close the fan, and with the right fingers push the outjogged cards into the deck diagonally so that their inner right corners protrude from the inner right corner of the deck (Photo 5). The four cards will also protrude a bit at the upper right corner. Stretching your right hand a little, contact the upper right corners of the four cards with the base of your fourth finger (Photo 6). Use this part of the finger to pull the four cards towards the right until they stick out parallel to the deck for about a third of their width (Photo 7). From the front and above, everything is covered by the back of the right hand. The small action of adjusting the cards is done as the right hand moves towards the left in preparation for spreading the deck on the table.

When making that spread you will find the four previously visible cards will disappear

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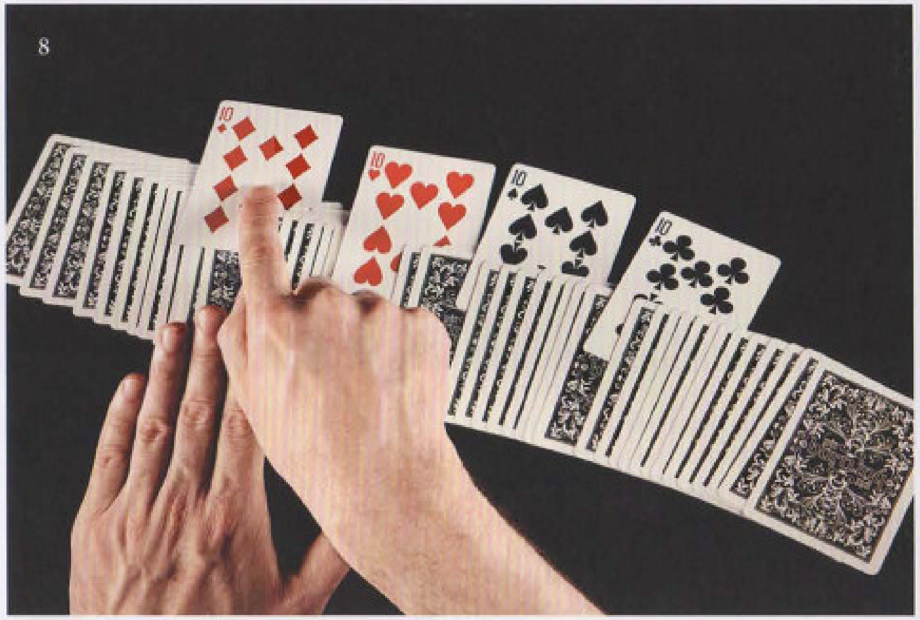
[2] The ribbon spread hideout was first published by Charles W. Nyquist in *Hugard's Magic Monthly* (August 1948, page 453, "The Ribbonspread Reverse").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and the face-up Tens are revealed – four indifferent cards have changed to the freely named quartet.[3,4]

After the change pause for a beat and then casually push each of the Tens out of the spread for about half its length, supporting the rest of the cards with the other hand (Photo 8). The resulting image directly contrasts the new situation with the previous one (Photo 4 again). As you push the cards forwards, name each one, echoing the exact words (and sequence of suits) used earlier with the four indifferent cards. All of this serves to visually and verbally reinforce the effect.

If you want to follow the suggested plotline, do not acknowledge the change at all. Instead, check with the spectators that now, they too recognize the Tens for what they are: *"Can you see them now? All four of them? Tens, right? Ok, good."*

After the first change has been fully digested, you will seemingly just pack it up and turn the four cards face down again. During this action, however, the four cards will be seen to have changed again, twice. Here's the procedure and the timing with your words:

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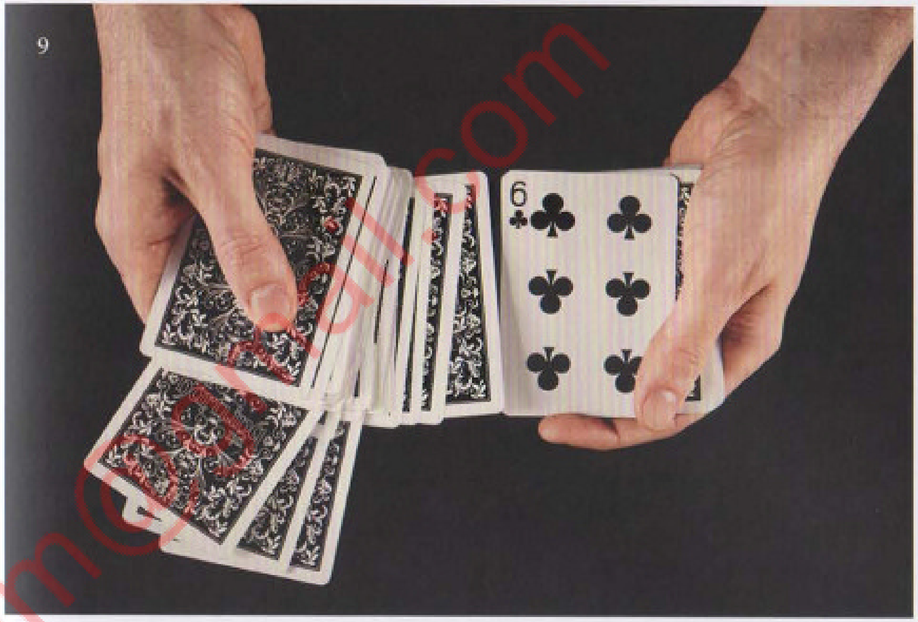
[3] David Jade came up with a similar handling and describes it in his effect "When They Were Kings" on page 23 of the September 2010 issue of *Genii* Magazine.

[4] Another effect in which (three) reversed indifferent cards change to those of a freely chosen value is Juan Tamariz's modern classic "Four of a Kind". That trick can be found in vol. 2 of the video series *Lessons in Magic* (1997) as well as in his *Sinfonía en Mnemónica Mayor* (2000), page 124. (In the English edition (*Mnemonica*, 2004) it can be found on page 94 under the title "All of a Kind".)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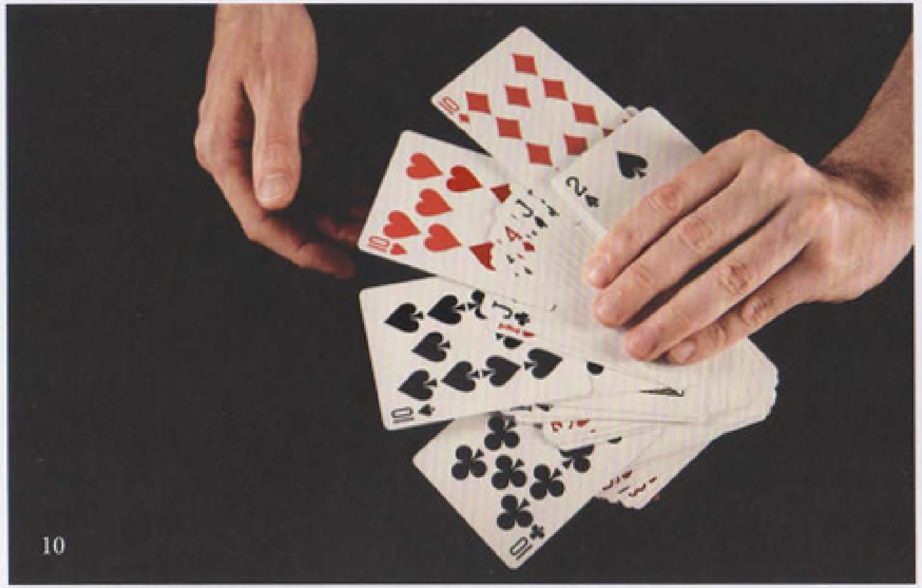
Pick up the spread and square everything in left-hand dealing position. Spread through the deck in order to turn over the four cards. As you come to each of them, the four indifferent cards will automatically show again. (Take care each time not to spread the indifferent card, as that would expose the face-up Ten underneath.) Each time you come to one of the face-up cards, use a double turnover to turn it face down and outjog the top card (the Ten) for about half of its length before spreading to the next face-up card (Photo 9).

Accompanying those actions explain: *"Sometimes, they just look different, and then people see them as a Five or a King, or any other weird cards. The other day, someone said he saw an Ace! Some optical thing, I guess."* Each time, you name the value that can be seen at that moment, but pretend nothing has actually happened. At the end you will have the four Tens outjogged while people believe they are the four indifferent cards.

To show the last change, hold everything in the left hand with the deck still slightly spread and continue: *"But you know, of course, that they are actually the four Tens."* To these words, turn your hand over to briefly flash the four Tens again (Photo 10).

After this final one-two punch, matter-of-factly square everything and give the deck a casual false shuffle to finish.



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RETURNING HOME

At the end of the effect, the deck remains in memorized order.

COMMENTS

Special handling for the Fours and Queens
When you try this effect with different quartets, you will find that the Fours and the Queens are distributed in the stack in a way that the handling does not work exactly as described (coincidentally, this is true for both the Tamariz and the Aronson stack).[5] These two values require a little special treatment: Suppose the Queens are named. Do everything as described until just before the second change. We take up the action as you are spreading through the deck and it is seen that the four have changed back to the indifferent cards: When you reach the first card (the Seven of Clubs in case of the Tamariz stack), you will find that you cannot simply do a double turnover and outjog the top card as in the usual handling, because of the face-up card directly under it. Instead, use the handling from the beginning: Do a double turnover to flip the Seven face down and push the double a bit to the right. As you upjog the top card (the Queen), secretly use your right fingers to pull the bottom card of the double (the Seven) to the right under the spread. You can now continue as described (and use the same handling again for the Three of Diamonds/Queen of Hearts pair).

While we are at it, here's another word of caution: Some of the Queens (and two of the Fours) being so close together can prove dangerous when pushing the cards partly out of the spread after the first change (Photo 8 again): If the indifferent cards are not hidden far enough under the spread, one of them can easily flash at that point. For this reason, with the Queens and Fours it is recommended to push the cards out to the right a bit further than normal in preparation for the ribbon spread hideout.

While "Identity" has a strong visual appeal, I also enjoy the presentational angle: Instead of presenting the changes, the performer behaves as if nothing really happened. It is apparently not the cards that change, but the spectators' perception. Everybody knows perfectly well that it is all just make-believe, of course, but the premise still gives rise to situations that are about the people rather than the cards – generally not a bad thing.

Especially the last two changes, which happen in rapid succession, seem to gain a lot from this kind of understated anti-presentation: Not drawing attention to the effects actually makes them stronger, and at the same time the notion of "nothing really happened" (the performer does not seem to notice any effect – apparently, it's all just figments of the spectators' imagination) almost automatically makes for good theatre.

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[5] In the Aronson stack, the Jacks pose a different problem: Two of them lie together in the deck, making even this alternate handling unsuitable. There are two easy solutions: Either move one of the Jacks to another position (exchanging it with the card next to it, for example), or instead of a value, simply ask for a number from one to ten.

The Illusionist

The Illusionist

In this piece the quartet concept is used to bring about two different effects. The first is a demonstration of skill. The second proves that the first has never happened.

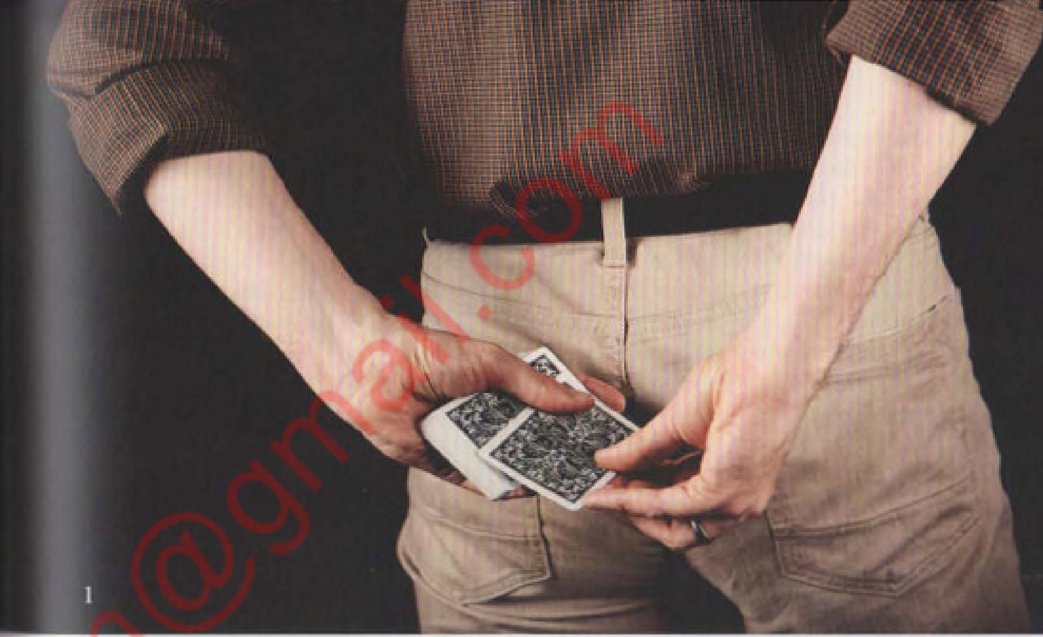
EFFECT

The performer cryptically remarks that sometimes the best tricks are the ones that never really happen. He offers to show such an "illusion".

Starting with a classic demonstration of skill, a spectator is asked to call out any four-of-a-kind. The performer repeatedly cuts the deck, each time locating one of the named cards.

Implausibly, he then claims that it all was, in fact, an illusion. And indeed: When the deck is spread face up, the cards that were just cut to are nowhere to be found.

The performer retrieves four cards that he had placed into his pocket before the trick even began – they are the named quartet! Sometimes, the best tricks are the ones that never really happened.



1

METHOD OVERVIEW

Small vaporizers are placed at strategic positions in the performing area, slowly spraying the audience with odourless hallucinogenic substances.

Alternatively, four cards are allegedly placed into a pocket, but really stolen back onto the deck. A face-down spread cull is used to bring the named quartet together, repeated triple undercuts reveal the four cards one at a time, and finally all four are palmed and loaded into the pocket in which the other four cards were never really put in the first place.

PERFORMANCE

"Sometimes, the best tricks are the ones that never really happen." After hopefully generating some interest with this mildly intriguing remark, announce that for the next piece you will perform *"An illusion. An illusion with forty-eight cards."*

Suiting the action to the word, you apparently place four cards away into your right back pocket. Here's what really happens: Clearly take the top four cards into your right hand. Move both hands behind your back, following your right hand with your gaze. Behind your back, immediately place the four cards from your right hand back on top of the deck and in one fluid motion continue your right hand's journey to your back pocket and inside as if placing the cards there (Photo 1 shows the four cards being fed right back onto the deck). Meanwhile, your left hand slowly makes its way back into view at your side as if it had never been away; the sneaky little devil.[1]

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[1] This handling is Denis Behr's.

With the deck now apparently four cards short, the effect officially begins: Ask a spectator to name any four-of-a-kind. When she does, casually spread through the face-down deck, commenting that you will try to locate those cards by the sense of touch. During this, the named quartet is brought to the bottom of the deck via a spread cull (this is described in detail in "Murphy's Law" on page 135).

Explain that you will now *"always cut the deck three times…"* and illustrate your words with a triple undercut bringing the top card to the bottom. (Briefly: Take a break under the top card. Cut about one third of the deck from the bottom to the top, counting out loud: *"One."* Cut a second packet from the bottom to the top (*"two"*). Finally, cut the deck at the break (*"three"*). You have brought the top card to the bottom.) Turn the deck face up, pointing to the indifferent card on the face and continue "*…and each time, on the third cut, here must be one of your cards!*" (The four cards of the named value are now directly under the face card of the deck.)

With the premise understood, the actual demonstration begins: This time with the deck face up, take a break under the top card and after a pause give the deck three cuts, bringing the top card to the bottom. During this, again count *"One, two, three."* On *"three"* you will be seen to have hit the first target-card. (Even though at this point the method is almost purely bluff – each time you just cut a card to the bottom – do not undersell the effect. To get a feeling for the strength of the demonstration from the audience's point of view, just imagine you could do this from a shuffled deck.)

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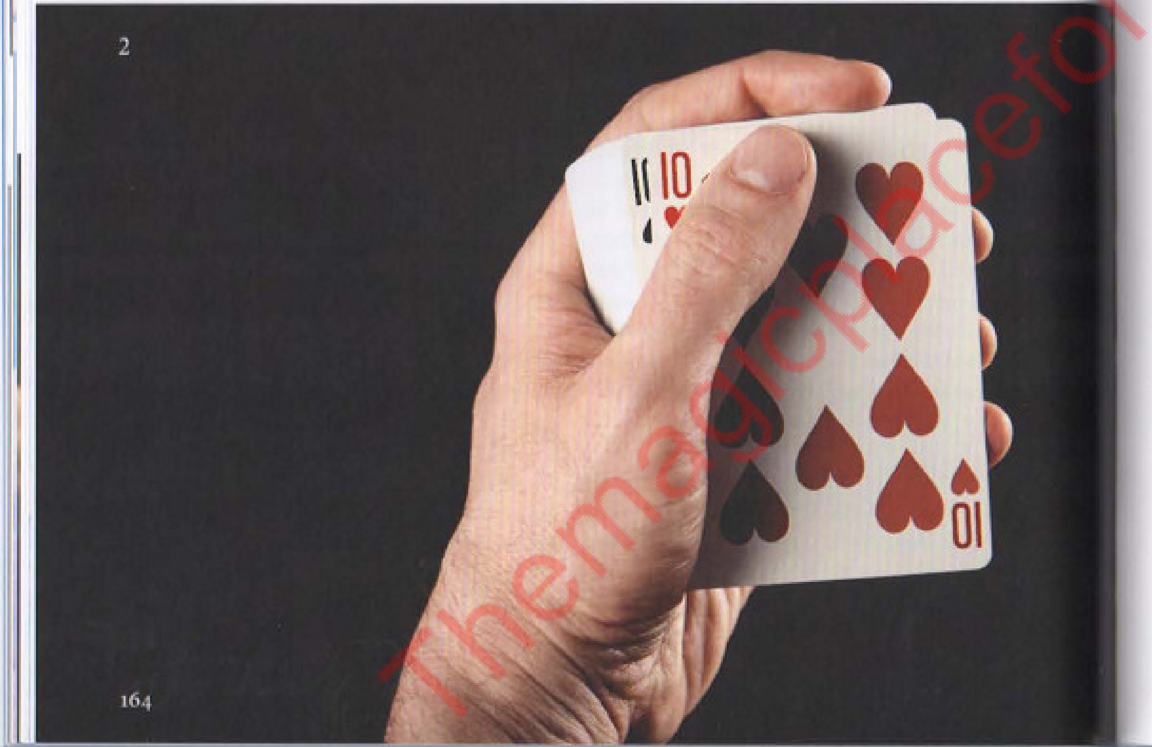


After the first card, to give a sense of progression and emphasize the apparent difficulty of the feat, briefly point out that the deck is perfectly square, there are no cards sticking out, no bent corners, etc. Then execute another triple undercut, repeating the refrain *"One, two, three"* to reveal the second card.

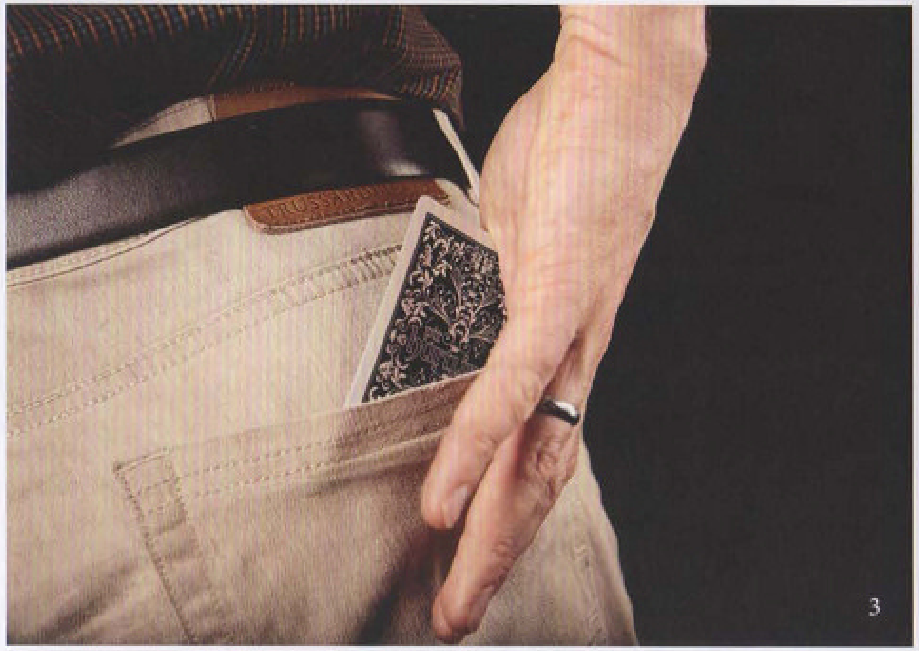
Now it's getting boring. You have done it, and then you have proven that you can do it again. Any further repetition would be pointless, unless a new element is added. This is done by reminding your audience that your task is getting more and more difficult, as fewer and fewer cards are left. More importantly, name the suits of the two cards you already found (the second one is still on the face of the deck) and offer a spectator the choice which of the remaining two you should locate next.

The card she names will either be the next one, in which case you simply cut the top card to the bottom as before, or it will be third from the face, in which case you take a break under the top *two* cards and cut both of them to the bottom. (As the quartet is still in the same order it lies in the memorized deck, you will always know which is which. Even so, if unsure, just tilt the deck slightly towards yourself and push the top card over a tiny bit with your thumb. This will partly expose the index of the next card and tell you all you need to know (Photo 2).) Either way, you successfully cut to the third card. Due to the build-up this will really be the climax of that part of the effect.

However, the fourth card is still missing, so after only a short pause say: *"And of course…"*, and almost matter-of-factly execute one last somewhat quicker triple cut to reveal the final card on the face of the deck. (Depending on the spectator's choice earlier, for the last card you will either have to cut the top card to the bottom as usual, or you may need to cut the bottom card to the top.) Underplayed like that, instead of feeling anticlimactic, the fourth card nicely rounds-off an impressive demonstration.

As the audience reacts, take the last card from the face of the deck, together with the indifferent card below it (depending on which card the spectator chose earlier, there may also be two of the named quartet on the face, in which case you take the top three cards as one) and temporarily hold them in the right-hand as the left hand turns the deck face down in dealing position. Place the double (or triple) card onto the deck face up, maintaining a break.

Ask a spectator to hold out her hand, turn the double (or triple) card face down on the deck and place the top (indifferent) card onto her hand. Say: *"I promised I would show you an illusion. And, you see, cutting to those four cards from a shuffled deck…"* to these words casually spread the deck between your hands and take a break under the top four cards, *"… was an illusion."* Slowly turn over the card on the spectator's hand: It has changed to an indifferent card. Under cover of the reaction, classic palm the top four cards in your right hand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and calmly load them into your right back pocket (*Photo 3*).

"An illusion…", you continue, as you spread the deck on the table face up, *"…with forty-eight cards."* Slowly go through the spread with the right hand, tapping cards at different positions to show the named quartet is nowhere to be found. Say: *"The cards are not in the deck. Never have been. You see, before we began, I placed four cards into my pocket…"*

With an obviously empty hand reach back and slowly and clearly remove the four cards from your pocket. Throw them face up onto the table, revealing the named quartet to finish.

RETURNING HOME

To return everything to memorized order, place the indifferent card (the one that changed on the spectator's hand) on the face of the deck and replace the four cards of the named quartet to their original positions (using, for example, Denis Behr's "Plop Replacement", briefly described with Denis' kind permission in the Comments section of "Murphy's Law", page 136).

COMMENTS

This effect combines two plots: Cutting to a four-of-a-kind (most commonly done with Aces, but see also[2]) and Annemann's "Nightmare effect"[3] (a selected card disappears and turns out to be a card previously removed from the deck).

Combining plots can be dangerous. All too easily the combination of two effects just muddles both. In "The Illusionist", I believe the marriage is a happy one: Bringing the four cards together allows for a very clean cutting sequence. The cuts, in turn, imply that the four cards are widely separated in the deck[4], which of course, makes it quite difficult to grasp how they can be in the pocket a second later (especially since those cards were apparently there before the trick even began).

Also, the change of one of the cards into an indifferent card marks the "magical moment" when the "illusion" breaks down and it is revealed that the cards have never been in the deck.

Prologues and Callbacks

It is often a good idea to begin a piece with some kind of short prologue; be it an intriguing remark, a fascinating plot or an interesting action.[5] The lines *"Sometimes, the best tricks are the ones that never really happen"* and *"an illusion with forty-eight cards"*, together with the action of placing four cards away for some yet unknown reason, can help to create interest and maybe even a bit of mystery.

They also serve as a memory-anchor, so when the phrase *"an illusion with forty-eight cards"* is repeated near the end, it immediately brings back that moment from the beginning. This very effectively foreshadows the climax. In fact, if you pause at that point, you may hear some very interesting words, as it dawns on your spectators, what is going to hit them…

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[2] Marlo published a handling for cutting to a named four-of-a-kind using edge marks in 1967: *Riffle Shuffle Finale*, "The Named Four" (Marlo, 1967), page 9 of the section "Riffle Finale".

[3] *Annemann's Nightmare Effects* (Annemann, 1928) "A Daytime Nightmare". See also *The Life and Times of a Legend* (compiled by Max Abrams, 1992) "Annemann's Nightmare Effects" Nr. 2, page 51.

[4] To strengthen this impression, as you cut to the cards you can throw in some remark like *"This one is a little further down"* or *"This should be at twenty-seven"*.

[5] For a very practical analysis of this technique see the chapter "Interest Catchers" in *Strong Magic* (Ortiz, 1994) page 171. For great examples, just read the opening lines of pretty much any effect by J.N. Hofzinser (For example: *Non Pus Ultra Vol II. Hofzinser's Card Artistry*. Magic Christian, Minch and The Conjuring Arts Research Center, 2004).

Four-Way Stop

Four-Way Stop

This is a version of the classic "Stop" effect, done with four cards. Its direct procedure, almost annoyingly fair handling and combination of methods give it a very clean overall appearance. (And for once, you don't even need to know the distance numbers.)

EFFECT

Someone names any four-of-a-kind. The cards are dealt face up one by one and a spectator calls stop at any point. Very clearly, the card at that spot is dealt face down and the process is repeated with three more spectators. At the end the four stopped-at cards are shown, and sure enough, they are exactly the named quartet.

METHOD OVERVIEW

The cards are dealt normally until a card of the named value is reached. From then on, a second deal is used until a spectator calls stop. Sometimes, a third deal is used, giving the spectator an additional free choice between two cards when he stops. The fourth card is positioned with a spread cull, allowing for a spectator to deal the cards himself.

PERFORMANCE

Have any four-of-a-kind named and cut the deck to bring the first of that value to the bottom of the deck. Start dealing the cards, taking them off the face-down deck one by one and turning them face up onto the table into what will become a long, winding spread. Deal slowly and let it be seen clearly that the cards are coming from the top (without mentioning the fact, of course).

Continue until you come to the first card of the named value. From then on, deal seconds, holding that card back on top of the deck.[1] Invite a spectator to stop you at any point, remarking that he best not wait too long as this will be done three more times.

When the spectator calls out stop, pause, briefly have him confirm his wish to stop at that spot and very clearly deal the next card in the row face down. In fact, instead of dealing the card, let the deck bevel forward into very open dealing position and let the top card slide off the deck, holding back the other cards with the pads of the second and third fingers (Photo 1). Over-emphasizing the fairness like this lends a certain drama to the situation. Some in the audience will wonder what this is all about, while others will already incredulously anticipate the effect.

After having placed the card face down, hold the focus for just another moment as you let the next card slide off the deck as well, tip it face up and name it (*"Look, the next card would have been the..."*). Only

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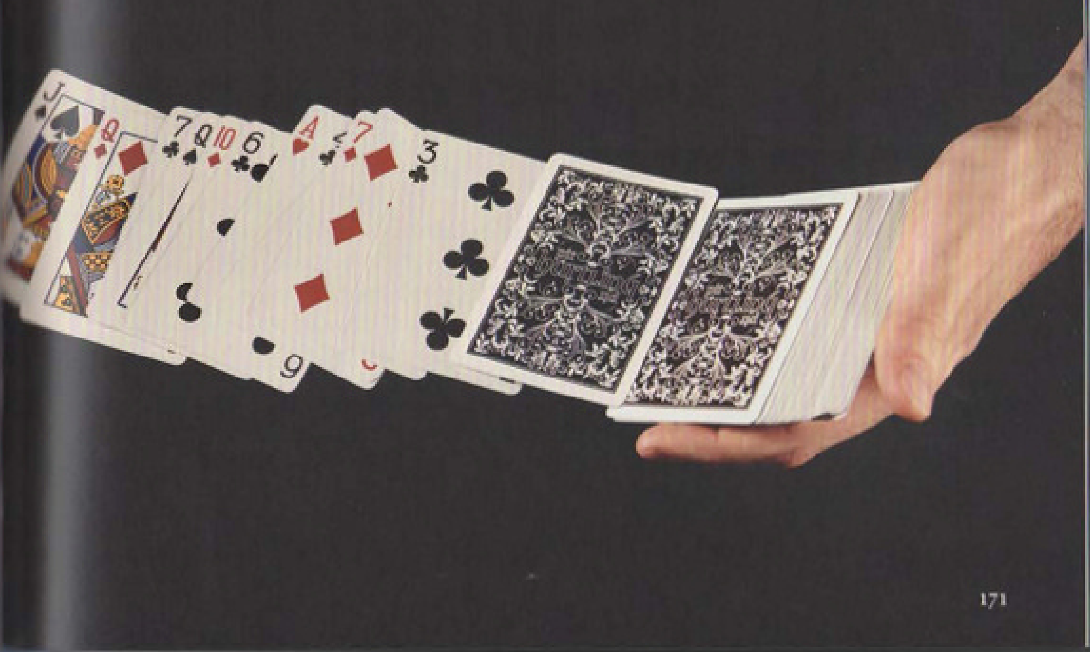

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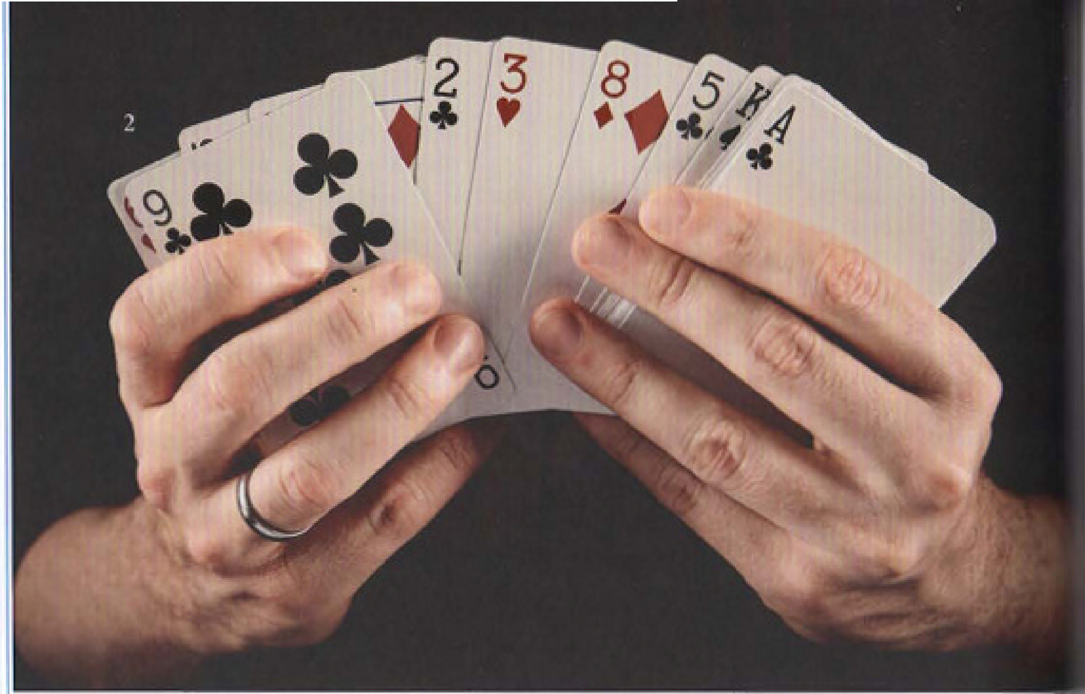
[1] A push-off second deal is recommended. For an excellent description see *Card College Vol. 4* (Giobbi, 2000), page 936.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then take the deck back in regular dealing position and continue to deal normally.

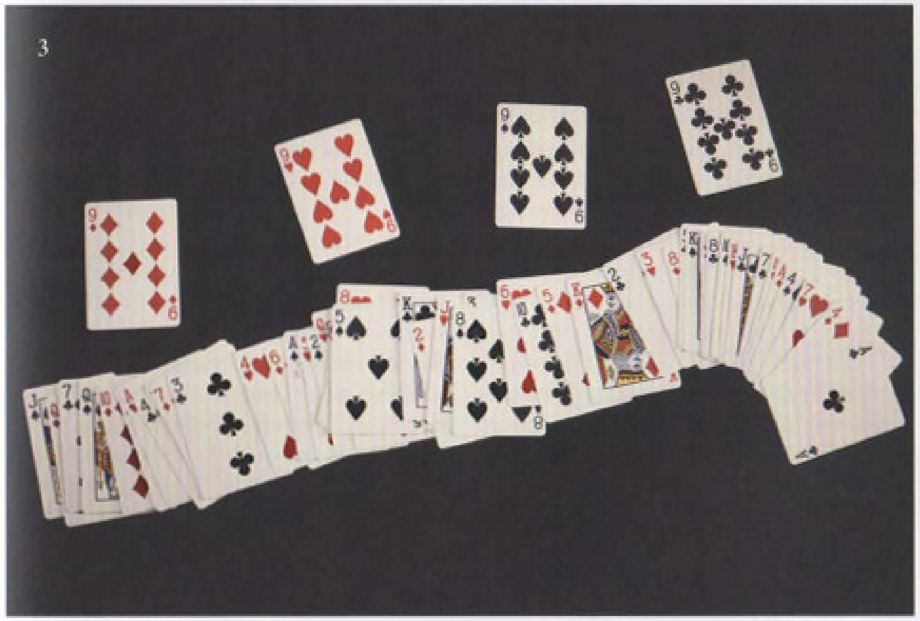
Deal until you come to the next card of the named value and again start second dealing from that point. Only when already very close to the target-card, address another spectator and ask him to call stop at any time. By appointing a new spectator only when ready, you avoid being stopped too early. If a target-card lies a bit further down in the deck, simply take your time dealing as you pretend to consider who to address next. (You will find it ideal to give the instruction to stop about two or three cards before the next target-card. This way, there is no danger of being stopped too early, and thanks to the classic "psychological-stop" timing, you will sometimes even get by without the need for second deals at all.)

The opposite can also happen: As you are second dealing, the next target-card may come up before you have been stopped. In that case a third deal is used. (Don't panic; if you are using the recommended push-off technique, the third deal is actually very similar to the second deal and not really much more difficult. You will find a brief description in the comments.)

Far from a necessary evil, the third deal actually allows for one of the strongest moments in the routine: Suppose you have been dealing thirds and the spectator stops you. As the two next cards are now both target-cards, you can offer a genuinely free choice. (*"Do you want this one or the next one?"*) Whichever she chooses, let that card slide off the deck face down with the usual almost annoying fairness. (If she chooses the second card, momentarily take the first card with the right hand, let the second card slide to the table and replace the card from the right hand to the top of the deck. Pause, and continue with second deals.) Especially if you can make the spectator choose the second card, everybody will remember that all was meticulously fair, even when he was being "difficult". More than once, I have had spectators explicitly mention this moment when describing the effect to others.[2]

Either way, eventually a third spectator stops you and you deal the third card face down. The last card of the named value is still waiting on the bottom of the deck, and now its time has come: Noting that you have only a few cards left, casually spread the remaining small packet a bit between your hands. Use the opportunity to secretly slide the bottom card all the way towards the right until it rides freely under the spread (Photo 2). Address a final spectator, look at the packet in your hands and spontaneously (?) have her name a number *"maybe up to ten or so."*

When she names a number it will be an easy matter to insert the last card at that position from under the spread. Once done, immediately hand the packet to the specta-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[2] Be aware that the question *"Do you want this one or the next one?"* easily provokes the answer *"The third one!"* That wish, of course, is easily granted by executing one more third deal. (Pretending that the request genuinely takes you by surprise and giving your "difficult" spectator a funny look will provide all the off-beat needed to prepare for this deal.) The next card is then momentarily taken in the right hand and the third card slowly and cleanly dealt as described.

tor and casually but clearly instruct her to *"deal the cards face up and then the card at that number face down."*

As she does this, turn slightly away and address the audience as a whole with some summarizing comment (*"Ok, so we should have four cards then."*) This way, the selection of the last card is literally in the spectators' hands with you seemingly not even paying attention. This image, together with the almost exaggeratedly clean handlings before will go a long way to create an overall impression of absolute fairness.[3]

All that remains is to build up the climax: Have the spectator from the beginning remind the group of her named value (Nine, say). Ask the spectator with the deck to deal the rest of the cards face up as everybody looks for a card of that value. There will be none. Take a moment silently to study the face-up spread and eventually say: *"There are no Nines."* After a suitable dramatic pause, continue: *"There is only one explanation. Or rather – four explanations:"* and then, as you turn the four face-down cards face up one by one: *"The Nine of Diamonds, the Nine of Hearts, the Nine of Spades and the Nine of Clubs!"* (Photo 3).

RETURNING HOME

All it takes to restore memorized order is to replace the four cards to their positions. As usual, I recommend Denis Behr's Plop-Replacement described on page 136.

COMMENTS

Plot and Presentation

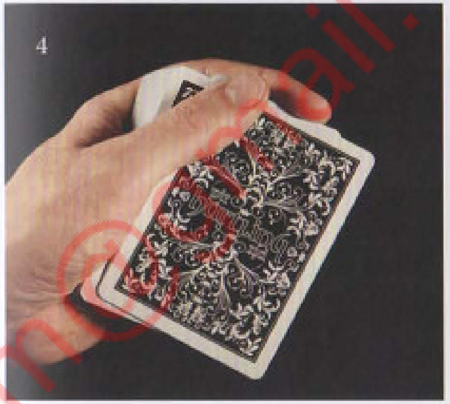
"Four-Way Stop" is interesting to me in that it does not have an explicit plot. In fact, at the beginning people have no idea what it is all about. The sole dramatization is the irritating insistence on the freedom of choice and the exaggeratedly clean placing-down of the cards.

This uncertainty allows for a very nice moment caused by a well placed pause as follows: After the second card has been placed face down and the next indifferent card dealt face up (*"Look, the next one would have been a King"*), stop, look at the spectator who named the four-of-a-kind and slowly repeat it back to him: *"Nines, right?"* When he confirms, pause, look over the spread so far, maybe even separating the cards at bit here and there with your finger. After a moment, many will realize that there is no card of the named value yet, and it will dawn on them what this is all about. When at this point you simply say: *"Hm."* and continue, be assured, you will have their full attention.

Other Presentations

While "Four-Way Stop" may best be done justice as a stand-alone item, it can also be used as a follow-up to "Murphy's Law". (In that trick a spectator is found to suffer a ridiculous amount of bad luck, from which this effect then officially "heals" him.)

Now, "Four-Way Stop" does not work easily with only one participating spectator. (You remember: To avoid being stopped too early you need to address a new spectator each time, officially deciding on someone only when the next target-card is very close.) One way to frame this as a follow-up to "Murphy's Law" then, is to appeal to the "power of the group" to generate luck for the "poor hapless soul". (It is a nice touch to have the "patient" deal for the fourth card himself, as described.)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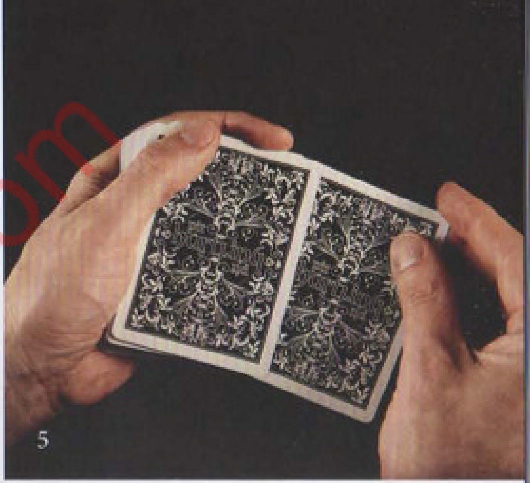
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With a similar plotline, "Four-Way Stop" also works as an opening effect in a formal close-up setting: Inform your audience that before you begin, you need quickly to check how much magic is "in the air". (Or, if they all know each other, to test the "collective magic-potential" of the group.) The effect, then, is a sign that *"tonight is a good night!"* or that *"with you lot, anything is to be expected!"* (If you mess up the trick, of course, you would say: *"You are hopeless!!"* and leave.)

A Push-Off Third Deal[4]

As promised, here is a brief description of an easy push-off third deal (easy that is, if you have already mastered a push-off second deal, which is, of course, no easy feat). In a push-off second deal, as you know, the top two cards are pushed to the right together (Photo 4). (Perfect alignment is not necessary, but with time you will find they become more and more squared all on their own.) The bottom card of the two is then dealt to the table with the right hand as the left thumb pulls the top card back onto the deck (Photo 5).

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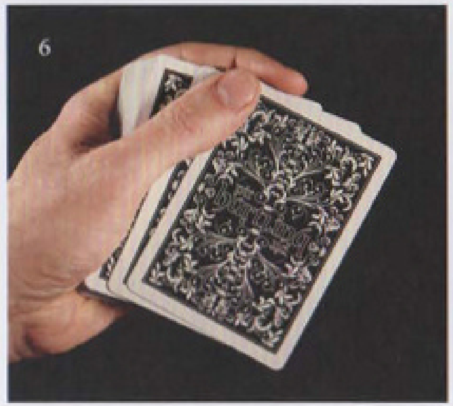
[3] For more on these "Mental Snapshots" see the comments to "Murphy's Law" on page 138.

[4] This is, basically, Ed Marlo's "Unit Control" Principle, see Seconds, *Centers, Bottoms* (Marlo, 1959), page 111.



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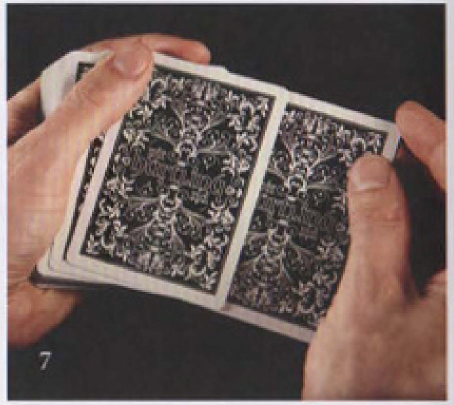

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Now, try a little experiment: Take one card from the deck and place it aside. Push over the top two cards together as for the second deal (Photo 4 again). Now clip the card you had placed aside under your thumb a bit further to the right than the pushed over pair. The left thumb contacts the back of the new top card as well as the second card (Photo 6). Now, completely ignore the additional card on top and execute the same actions as in a second deal: Deal the third card to the table with the right hand as the left thumb pulls everything else back onto the deck (Photo 7). Congratulations, you have done a third deal.

You will have noticed that the left thumb has pulled back the top two cards together. This is, in fact, the whole trick: During the third deal, the left thumb is in constant contact with the top two cards (which are slightly spread to allow this) and those two move back and forth as a unit, as if glued together.

That is really all there is to it, in principle: The third deal is a second deal with one additional card held in place by the left thumb. To execute the deal in practice proceed as follows: With the left thumb push the top card a bit to the right. Leave it there, ignore it, and execute the actions of a second deal: Push the top two cards of the deck to the right together (now really the second and third card) and deal the bottom of these two to the table with the right hand as the left thumb pulls everything else back onto the deck. Repeat as needed.

The Right Kind of Wrong

The Right Kind of Wrong

This trick uses the quartet principle in yet another way to bring about a rather offbeat effect. Despite its convoluted nature and weird plot (or maybe because of it), this piece has proven a firm favourite with lay audiences and magicians alike.

EFFECT

Concentrating on a number from one to ten, a spectator shuffles a deck and cuts it into four piles. The top cards are turned over, but instead of the cards that fit his number as intended, they are just random cards. Everything is cleared up when the performer realizes that he used the wrong deck: The values of the cut cards are counted down in another deck that has been on the table the whole time – the cards found at those positions are exactly the desired four-of-a-kind.

METHOD OVERVIEW

The distance numbers of a named quartet are forced from a shuffled deck. When those numbers are counted to in the second (memorized) deck, the cards at those positions are the wanted four-of-a-kind.

PERFORMANCE

Place two decks onto the table, one shuffled, one memorized. Confide in your audience the following personal trick of the trade: *"It is never easy to perform a new trick. It may well happen that it does not work. And for such a case I have a special strategy: Even if the trick requires only one deck of cards, I place two decks on the table and have somebody choose one. I do the trick, and if all works well – fine. If something goes wrong, however, I can always say it's not my fault – he picked the wrong deck! Brilliant!"*

After boasting about this rather dubious practice, announce a demonstration of the power of the unconscious and ask a spectator to name any number from one to ten.[1] As soon as he names a number, interrupt him and say *"Ah, but first: Pick a deck!"* Given the preceding remarks, this moment can be quite amusing.

If the spectator chooses the memorized deck, pick it up, casually cut to bring the first card of the named number to the third position from the top (the "first" in the "quartet" sense of the word, remember; see the introduction to this chapter), put the deck into its case and place it in front of the spectator. Then hand someone else the other deck to shuffle. If the spectator chooses the regular deck, have him shuffle it, as you pick up the memorized deck and proceed as above.

When the spectator is done shuffling, retrieve the deck from him and spread through the shuffled cards face up, inviting your spectator to look at the cards as they pass by. *"That way"*, you tell him, *"your subconscious will see and remember the position of every card."*[2]

As you spread through the face-up deck, use the opportunity to cull first any Three and then three cards corresponding to the three distance numbers of the named value. Suppose the spectator named the number five. In the case of the Tamariz stack, the distance numbers for the Fives are (8,9,5), so you would cull a Three and then an Eight, a Nine and a Five. (In the Aronson stack you would cull a Three, followed by a Nine, an Eight and a Seven. See the lists on pages 120 and 121, respectively.)

Square the deck to bring the culled cards to the back and immediately give the deck a short shuffle, running the top three cards to the bottom. You will end with a Three on top of the deck and the three distance numbers for the named value on the face.

These four cards are now forced using a very direct and easy handling of "Specta-

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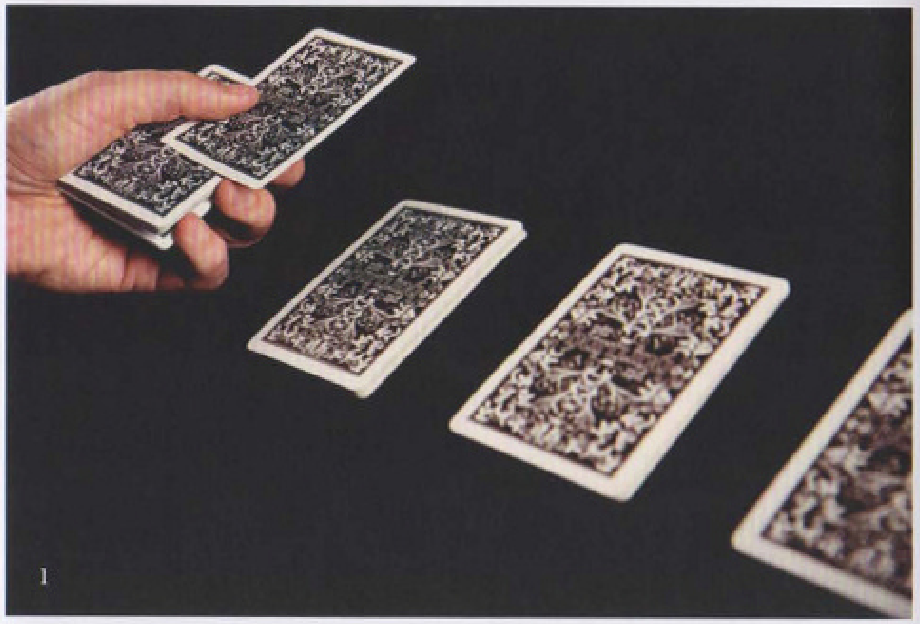
[1] As you will be forcing the named value's distance numbers, depending on your stack, the choice may be restricted: Any distance numbers higher than thirteen will not work for this (thirteen can still be represented by a King). In the Tamariz Stack, two of the Queens are too far apart (one of their distance numbers is fifteen), so you can ask for a number from one to ten. For the Aronson stack you would say *"Name any number between one and ten; eight or three, or... which one would you like?"* Mentioning the unwanted cases yourself effectively cancels them. All remaining numbers will be fine.

[2] It may just be a matter of personal taste, but it makes me cringe when this kind of pseudo-psychological mumbo-jumbo is presented as authentic. Here, it is said more than half-jokingly. (Also, in a minute the trick will fail, anyway.)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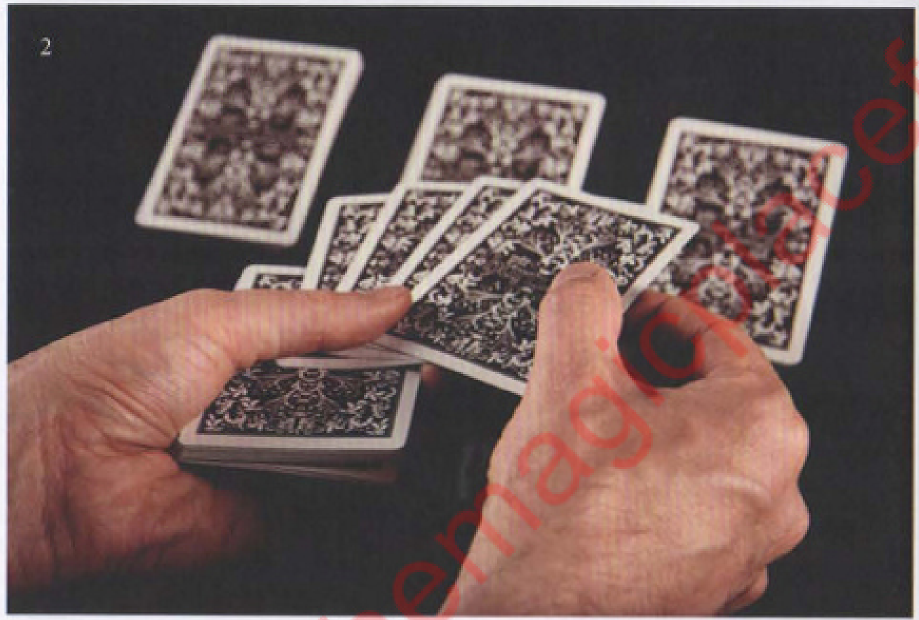
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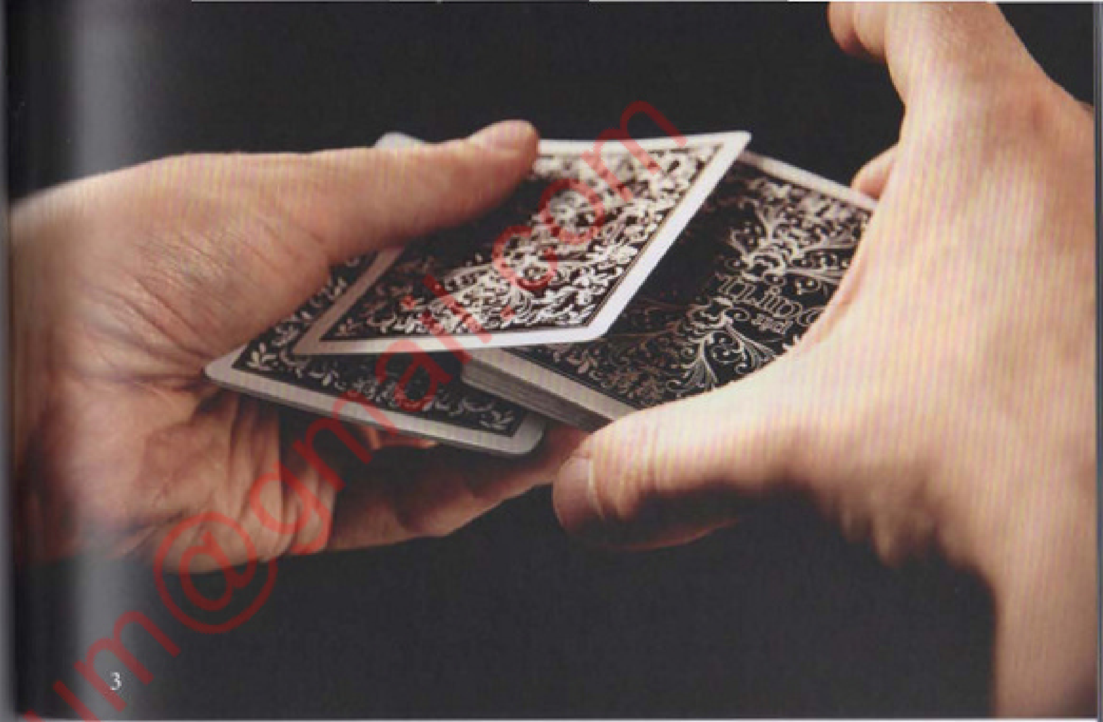
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tor-cuts-the-Aces"[3]: Place the deck onto the table and have the spectator cut it into four piles (the bottom part of the deck with the three cards on the face should end up at the left end of the row, and the top part with the Three on top on your right).

Pick up the packet on your left and casually spread it between your hands, commenting that he *"could have cut a few cards more or a few less."* Use this action to take a break above the bottom three cards. Say: *"Let's look at the cards you cut to"*, and to those words move the top card of the packet forwards and to the right a bit, visually isolating it from the packet (Photo 1). With your right hand take the top card of each of the other packets and add them to the first (Photo 2).

The following actions are quite discrepant, but done openly with an unhurried, steady rhythm, all will seem quite normal: Move your right hand over the left and square the four exposed cards with the packet. Immediately take hold of everything above the break with the right hand in end grip and move the packet (minus the three bottom cards, which remain in the left) towards the right. The left thumb holds back the top card (Photo 3) and the packet in the right hand is used to flip that card face up onto the other three cards. Put the packet from the right hand back onto the table and place the face-up Three on top of it. Turn the oth-

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[3] Namely, Larry Jenning's "Reaping The Aces I". See *The Classic Magic of Larry Jennings* (Maxwell, 1986), page 130.

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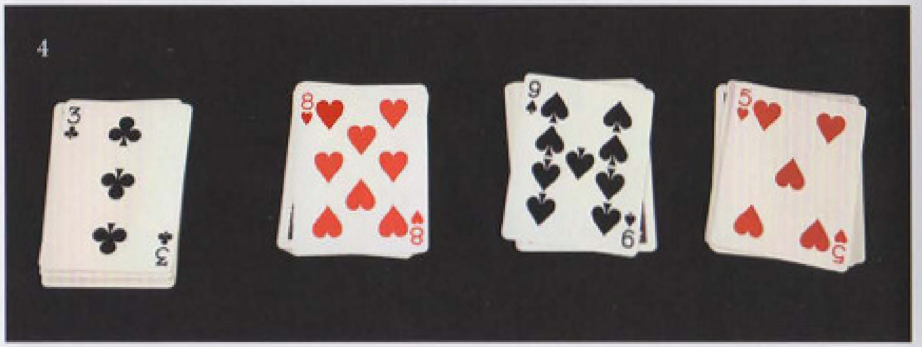

er three cards face up one by one and place them onto the other three piles, apparently where they came from (Photo 4).

The four cards are revealed one at a time and have nothing to do with the named number. With each card you become more and more hesitant, until it becomes clear that your little experiment with the "subconscious" is a complete failure.[4] Pause a beat or two, apparently lost in thought and trying to figure out what went wrong. With a little luck, and especially if the selection of the deck at the beginning was set-up well, someone might break the silence, joking that the spectator "picked the wrong deck." (If nobody makes that joke, of course, make it yourself.)

Laugh with your spectators, but suddenly appear to consider that scenario in earnest and say: *"What if you did cut at exactly the right spots – only in the wrong deck?"*

Remove the memorized deck from its case and, pointing to the first of the four cards, say: *"Three."* Count three cards face down onto a pile and turn over the third: It will be a Five. Let this register and then count to the next number forming a second packet, again turning the card that falls on the last number face up: Another Five. Continue like that with increasing tempo, forming four piles and thus mirroring the four piles cut by the spectator. The quartet of his named number is found at the exact positions indicated by the cards he cut to in the other deck (Photo 5).

RETURNING HOME

To go back to memorized order first turn the face-up cards of the quartet (the Fives in our example) back face down on top of their piles. Place the piles together from right to left and overhand shuffle the combined packet, running the cards singly, thus reversing their order. (Even though this is done in the offbeat between effects it is recommended to break up the long run of single cards with small pauses at irregular intervals.) Finally, place the packet together with the remainder of the deck. The cards are back in memorized order.

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[4] Sometimes, a card is in fact of the right number (in our case of the Fives, for example, the last card is indeed a Five). For some reason, this only makes the "mistake" even more credible.

COMMENTS

The effect of "The Right Kind of Wrong" is somewhat indirect, to say the least. If done "cold", while still deceptive, it will be little more than a puzzle; and probably a rather confusing one at that.

What makes this work as an entertaining and easily understood piece of magic is the plotline: Having a spectator make some irrelevant decision only to be able to blame it all on him in case something goes wrong (and actually boasting about that "brilliant" idea in front of an audience) is just too ludicrous to leave anyone cold. At the same time the notion of having done everything right, only in the "wrong deck" provides the necessary clarity.

In the description, the first card of the named number is cut to the third position (and thus, the first card to be culled is a Three). You may have noted that it is not strictly necessary to have the card at any specific position: You may simply cut the first card of the named value anywhere close to the top (a look at the face card of the deck will always tell you its exact position), and later cull the appropriate value. However, as I have mentioned elsewhere, during actual performance, there are a lot of things going on and I would rather not tax my memory more than absolutely necessary. This is why I always bring the card to the same position (and always cull the same value). It is simply one less thing to remember.

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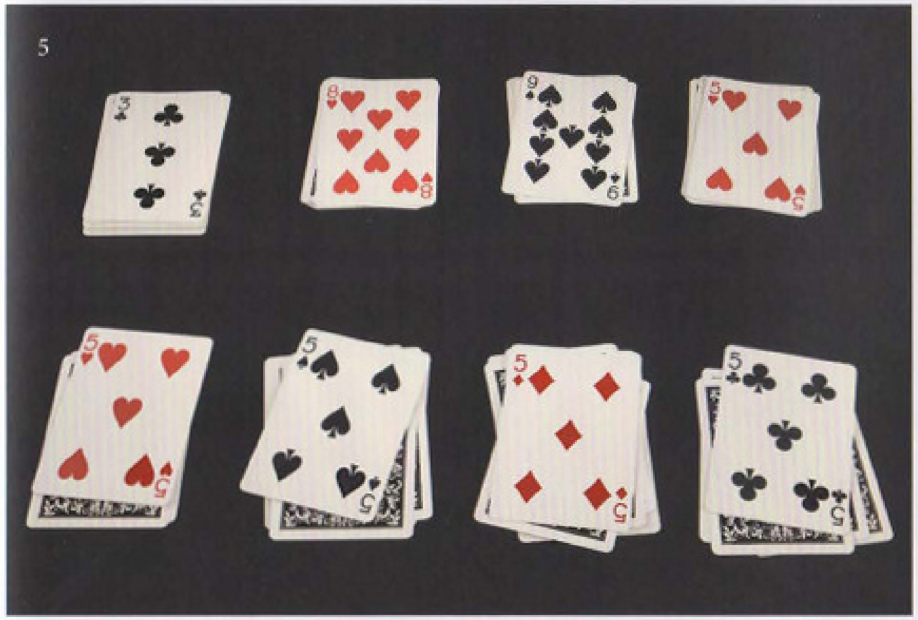

The Stack-Dependents

The Stack-Dependents

The effects in this book so far can be done with any memorized stack. The four routines in this last section, however, require the Tamariz stack. (Well, almost: "Quick Change" also works with the Aronson stack, and "Game of Chance" does not strictly require any particular stack at all, as you will see.)[1]

This section contains only a small number of routines. There is a simple reason for this: Stack-dependent material is usually just not very good. It is easy to see why: Normally when creating a trick, one decides what the effect should be and then puts the deck in the required order. Stack-dependent material, however, puts the cart before the horse: Instead of the set-up serving the effect, everything has to submit to the fixed order.

Occasionally, however, wanderings into the depths of stackland can lead to surprising discoveries, and the limitations posed by the stack can sometimes spark creativity. I consider the following four routines examples of this. None of them would have originated (dare I say could have originated?) without first noticing some property of the stack, but instead of remaining mere academic findings, each has eventually gained features that I believe merit their inclusion in these pages:

"Fairy Tale Poker" is an eight-handed Poker deal, complete with draw, that can be performed entirely out-of-my-hands. It also features a somewhat unusual verbal multiple-out ploy.

"Quick Change" is a rather visual effect (somewhat of a rarity in memorized deck magic) that comfortably works without the displacement of any card.

"Poker Night at the Improv" is a veritable firework of colour changes and card productions. Certainly one of the more complex routines in the book, it is great fun and, if nothing else, it shows just how far those things can be taken.

Finally, "Game of Chance" is a fun multi-phase betting game that applies a little-used Alex Elmsley principle to the colours of the deck. While the set-up is quite flexible, it can be reached surprisingly quickly from the Tamariz stack.

Those of you who use that order are ready to go. For everyone else, here it is:

THE TAMARIZ STACK

4C, 2H, 7D, 3C, 4H, 6D, AS, 5H, 9S, 2S, QH, 3D, QC, 8H, 6S, 5S, 9H, KC, 2D, JH, 3S, 8S, 6H, 10C, 5D, KD, 2C, 3H, 8D, 5C, KS, JD, 8C, 10S, KH, JC, 7S, 10H, AD, 4S, 7H, 4D, AC, 9C, JS, QD, 7C, QS, 10D, 6C, AH, 9D.

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[1] Also note that while for the next four effects you will have to use the Tamariz stack, you do not strictly need to *know* the Tamariz stack: As long as the cards are in the right order and you follow the steps, the routines will work. This means you can try them out, whether you have memorized the stack or not.

Fairy Tale Poker

Fairy Tale Poker

While it is always handy to have a few Poker deals in a memorized deck (as any user of the Aronson stack will happily attest), what distinguishes this routine is not the deal itself, but the way verbal strategies are used to make it seem like the deck fulfils spectators' wishes.

Where most Poker deals are demonstrations of skill and card control "Fairy Tale Poker" is just the opposite: The deck seems to arrange itself as if by magic – the whole routine is "out-of-my-hands".

EFFECT

The performer reveals that he is using an enchanted deck of cards: Like in a fairy tale this deck can arrange itself and grant spectators' wishes. The result is a fantastic round of Poker in which the deck's owner beats seven other strong hands with his own winning four Aces.

METHOD OVERVIEW

With a few alterations from memorized order, the deck is set for an eight-handed Poker deal. By a kind of verbal multiple-out strategy the impression is given that the audience chooses various aspects of the deal when in fact everything is always the same.

PREPARATION

The Tamariz stack is given four modifications: Move the Queen of Clubs between the Two of Clubs and the Three of Hearts. Exchange the Ace of Diamonds and Ten of Clubs. Exchange the Five of Hearts and Nine of Spades (next to each other) and move the Seven of Hearts between the Jack of Diamonds and Eight of Clubs. Cut the Four of Diamonds to the face and you are ready to go. (See the comments for an efficient handling for this.)

PERFORMANCE

This explanation will be in two parts: First the actual procedure, then the verbal part of the method (giving the impression that the audience chooses various aspects of the deal).

The procedure

Give the deck a false shuffle and place it into its case (the Four of Diamonds still on the face). After having the kind of hands, the number of players and/or a specific hand "chosen" as will be explained below, ask a spectator to remove the cards from the case. Instruct him to deal the top card to you and continue dealing the deck to seven more players (for a total of eight) each receiving the usual five cards. Everything is dealt face down. When done, tell the spectator to place the remainder of the deck to the side.

The hands before the draw

Turn the hands face up one by one starting with the one to your left to show *"what the deck has arranged"* for the players. There will be the following hands: Four-of-a-Kind Nines, One Pair Kings, Four-of-a-Kind Twos, Two Pair Queens and Sevens, Four-of-a-Kind Threes, Three-of-a-Kind Eights, Four-of-a-Kind Sixes and your own hand which is left face down for now (Photo 1).

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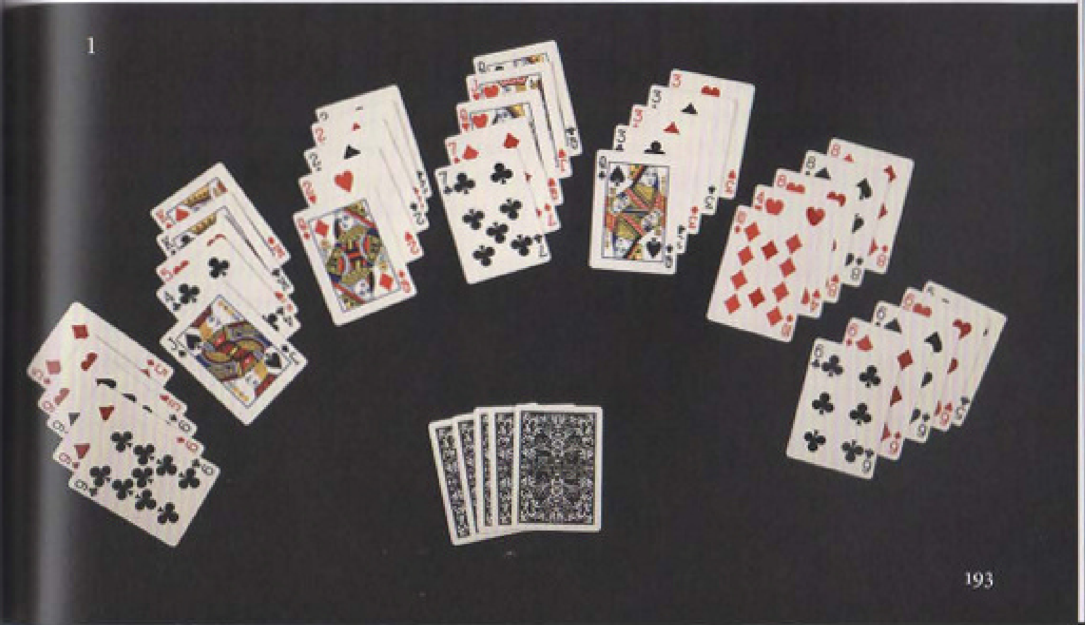

The draw

Following the rules of classic Draw Poker, each player can now discard cards and draw new ones trying to improve his or her hand:

The first player already has Four-of-a-Kind and stands pat.

The second player discards the two "small" cards, the Four and Five: In this routine, the discarding of cards is always indicated by turning the cards face down in place: Either take out the Four and the Five together, casually exchange their order and replace them face down at their original spot between the Kings and the Jack, or turn them over in place one by one[1]. Ask the spectator to deal one new card and then another. The player will receive another King and another Jack, perfectly matching the other cards and improving the hand to a Full House.

The next player stands pat with four Twos.

For the next player ask a spectator what should be done. The player holds Two Pair so the obvious answer will be to discard the fifth card, the Jack of Hearts. Turn this card face down in place and ask for a new card. It will be a third Seven improving this hand to a Full House as well.

The next player already holds four Threes so he stands pat.

For the next hand again ask a spectator what he wants to do. There are three Eights so he will probably discard the other two cards (if for some reason he decides to discard only one of them, it makes no difference). Turn the Four and the Ten face down as explained (either one by one or exchanging the two in the process) and replace them on the face of the other three. Have the spectator give you two (or one) new card(s). Luck strikes again and the hand improves to yet another Four-of-a-Kind.

Your last opponent stands pat again with four Sixes.

Say: *"With these kinds of hands, there will be a lot of money in the pot! And, of course, an enchanted deck makes sure that its owner always wins."* With these words turn your own hand face up and reveal the four Aces (Photo 2).

The verbal part of the method

As you have seen, in "Fairy Tale Poker" the deck is dealt to eight players (yourself and seven opponents) and two of the hands will be the four Nines and the four Sixes. Together, those circumstances allow for a multiple-out in which spectators seemingly determine various aspects of the deal:

With the deck in the card case, address your audience and say: *"In every game of Poker there are different hands, different numbers of players and so on. With those enchanted cards we just have to tell the deck what we want and it will grant our wishes. Someone please name a number, between five and ten, say, to make it interesting."* After only the slightest pause, add: *"Most people actually say seven, but this is not one of those psychological tricks. You really can name whatever you want."* While this sounds fair, it all but cancels the number seven. Here, then, are the outs for any of the numbers they may name:

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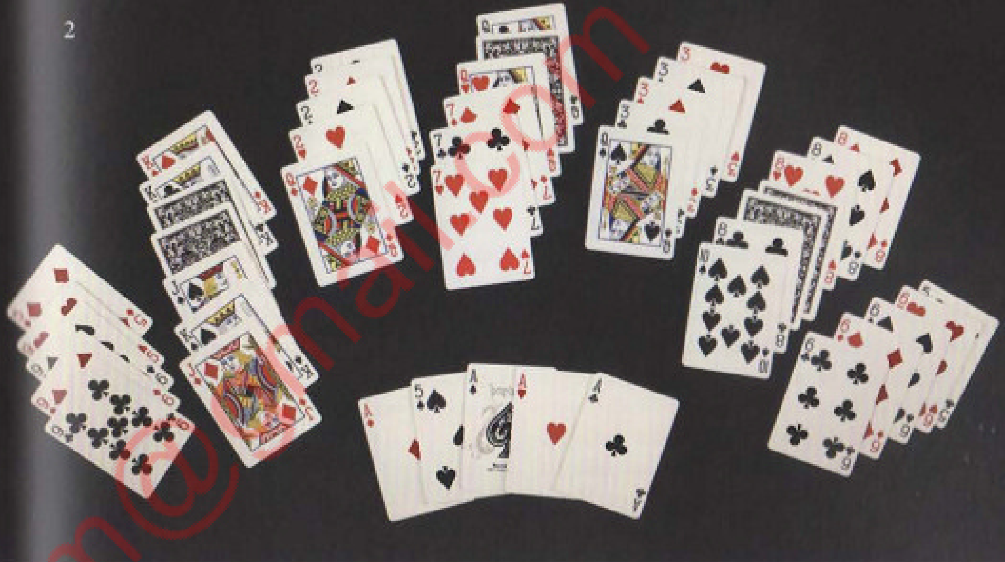

If they say six:
"Ah the Sixes; very good! We just have to tell the deck, and it will arrange the Sixes for you. Here, let me show you..."

If they say seven:
"Oh, seven at one blow! One poor magician against seven bad guys! But, not to worry – with this deck we can easily conquer seven opponents!"

If they say eight:
"Eight players in the game, ok!"

If they say nine:
"Ah the Nines; very good! We just have to tell the deck, and it will arrange the Nines for you. Here, let me show you..."

In other words, depending on the spectators' answer, you interpret it as either a choice of hand or the number of players/opponents. Either is plausible, and done without hesitation, neither will be questioned.

If seven or eight is named you are done. If six or nine is named, however, that's great: You can give your audience another choice, asking for another number from five to ten. If six or nine is named again (the other one): Wonderful! The enchanted deck will grant both wishes! (If seven or eight is named now, this will be the number of players again, as before.) Either way, the

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[1] If you really wanted to do this strictly no-touch, you would instruct the spectator to turn the Four face down in place and only then to do the same with the Five. In actual practice, I found it does not noticeably weaken the appearance of "no touch" if you simply handle the discards yourself.

Themagicianforum@gmail.com

spectators seem to have wished for a certain hand and/or decided the number of players.

Whatever the spectators' choice(s), take your time for a magic gesture that illustrates "telling the deck" what they have chosen. I usually open the flap and have a spectator whisper their wish(es) to the cards. (*"Seven bad guys please"*, or *"The four Sixes for eight players please."*) This is admittedly quite silly, but also very memorable.

After the magic gesture, hand the deck to a spectator: If the number nine was named, hand it to a spectator on your left. If the number six was named, hand it to a spectator on your right.[2] In any case, have the spectator remove the cards from the box and deal the first card to you.

If the number seven was named, before continuing the deal, say: *"How many bad guys did you want again? Seven. Against seven, ok..."* and you count along from one to seven as he continues the deal to complete the first round. (Done like this, it feels as if you complied with his number seven, even though the deck is actually dealt to a total of eight players.) He completes the deal in the normal manner, dealing five cards to each player. (For the number eight, of course, simply have him deal the deck to eight players without pausing after the first card.)

If they named the numbers six or nine you will now have a strong effect: Have the dealer show his cards – he will hold exactly the requested hand!

If this effect has taken place, pause briefly to let the spectators fully realize and digest what happened (in other words, make what Ascanio calls an "Assimilation Pause"[3]) and then turn each of the other hands (except your own) face up. Briefly comment on them and continue with the draw as described above. At the end everybody will have a very strong hand and you hold the winning four Aces!

RETURNING HOME

At the end of the routine (Photo 2 again), the first step is to replace the cards you received during the draw: Replace the Ten of Spades and Eight of Clubs onto the deck, followed by the Jack of Diamonds and King of Spades and finally the Seven of Hearts which is immediately sent to second from the bottom of the packet with a slip cut.

Next you undo the actual deal. This is easily done: Place your own hand face up onto the four Nines, both together onto the next hand, and so on till everything is back in one packet. Place everything face down on top of the deck, holding a break between the packet and the rest of the deck. Apparently realizing that you have accidentally (?) left a few cards reversed, quickly deal the cards into five packets (face down) until you come to the break (each time you come to a face-up card, just turn it face down).

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[2] To remember that Nine is left and Six is right I found it helps me to imagine a pot of 96 dollars. Also, "nine" and "left" spell with the same number of letters.

[3] See again *La Magia de Ascanio – La Concepción Estructural de la Magia* (Ascanio, Etcheverry, 2000). In English as *The Magic of Ascanio – The Structural Conception of Magic* (Ascanio, Etcheverry, Benatar, 2006).

Commenting something like *"I think that was all of them"* stop the deal, collect the five piles from right to left and replace everything on top of the deck.[4]

All that remains is to correct the small modifications from the beginning, similar to the procedure explained below (the Seven of Hearts is already back in place) and the deck is back in memorized order.

COMMENTS

Handling for the preparation

The alterations from memorized order to prepare for "Fairy Tale Poker" can of course simply be done beforehand. In case you are interested, however, here is the handling I use to make those changes in front of an audience:

Cut the Queen of Clubs to the top. Take a break under the Two of Clubs (fifteenth from the top) and slip cut the Queen into that spot (you can lose the break afterwards, it is no longer needed). Hold the deck in the right hand in position for a face-up overhand shuffle. Lift shuffle the face-up deck until you come to the Nine of Spades (see "Using a lift shuffle to cut the deck at a specific spot" in "Close Encounters" on page 53). In this case the Nine of Spades is fourth from the face, so simply lift shuffle three cards from the face to the back one by one without changing their order.

Run the next two cards (Nine of Spades and Five of Hearts) into the left hand one on top of the other like in a normal overhand shuffle (this exchanges them), and then steal the two right back under the deck as you continue the lift shuffle. (Until that point, everything can be done blind, without looking at your hands.)

Keep lift shuffling (essentially repeatedly cutting small groups of cards from the face to the back) until the Ace of Diamonds is on the face of the deck. The Ace is now exchanged with the Ten of Clubs using the elegant and efficient handling by Áriston[5]: With the left thumb peel the Ace into the left hand. Use the left thumb to spread the deck slightly in the area near the Ten of Clubs (it is sixteenth from the face (Photo 3) and take all the cards above the Ten into the left hand on top of the Ace, leaving the Ten on the face of the deck. Finally, peel the Ten of Clubs onto the left-hand packet. This has exchanged the Ace and the Ten.

Continue lift shuffling until you come to the Four of Diamonds (it will be very close to the big lift-shuffle-gap between the packets). Stop the lift shuffle with the Four of Diamonds on the face.

Hold the deck face up in dealing position and take a break between the Jack of Diamonds and the Eight of Clubs (ten cards from the face). With the left thumb push the Four of Diamonds on the face of the

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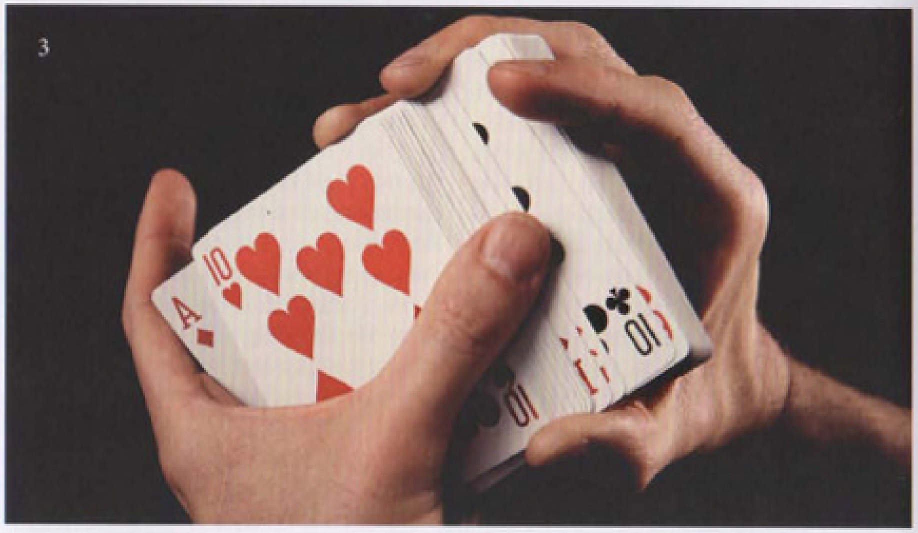
[4] Instead of dealing the forty cards into five piles, you can also give them three out faro shuffles and then invert their order (by openly dealing them into a pile in order to fix the reversed cards, for example). I prefer to do it as described.

[5] See page 194 in *Sinfonía en Mnemónica Mayor* (Tamariz, 2000) or page 339 in the English edition *Mnemonica*: "Third Objective: To exchange the positions of two cards without altering the rest of the deck, B. With an overhand shuffle".



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deck a bit to the right and slip cut the next card (Seven of Hearts) into the break (Photo 4). You can lose the break and you are ready to go.

Calmly executed the procedure takes less than 30 seconds.

Verbal forcing and squeezing out bonus effects

Nine and six are the best cases (they allow for a choice of a second and maybe even a third number, as explained above). A simple ploy to increase your chances of getting those numbers is this: Instead of asking a specific spectator for a number between five and ten, address the group at large. This way, typically several spectators will answer, and after making some brief comment to the side, seemingly not paying attention, you can now officially address a person who named one of the "good" numbers, asking him or her to repeat their wish.

With a little verbal prompting, you can achieve yet another effect from the same deal: You may have noticed, that while the initial deal gives several different kinds of hands (One Pair, Two Pair, Three of a Kind) after the draw every player ends up with either a Full House or Four-of-a-Kind. You can capitalize on this homogeneity and turn it into an effect:

After having a hand and/or number of players chosen as described, have the spectators name some general Poker hands. Your goal is to get to "Full House" and "Four-of-a-Kind". You can say, for example: *"As you know, there are many different Poker hands: One Pair, Two Pair and Three of a Kind, and then of course, the more interesting hands: Straight, Full House, Royal Flush and so on. What are good Poker hands? Which hand would you like to get in a game?"* By indirectly calling the first three hands "less interesting" those are effectively out. Saying "Flush" and "Royal Flush" somewhat quickly and putting a bit more emphasis on "Full House" makes this a likely candidate, especially if you address the group as a whole again instead of only one spectator, encouraging several people to answer.[6]

If they have named six or nine earlier, matters are even easier. You can simply say: *"Ok, so we have the Nines, that's a Four-of-a-Kind. Any other good Poker hands you know?"* A Full House is bound to be among the named hands, and from all the different options you eventually suggest: *"How about we say Full House and Four-of-a-Kind? Is that ok? Are those hands you'd like to hold in a game?"* Of course, they will agree. Having more or less smoothly gotten to "Full House" and "Four-of-a-Kind" officially request the deck to *"arrange only those hands today!"*

After the deal, remind the audience that they have requested only Full House and Four-of-a-Kind, but now there are clearly some much weaker hands as well! The "enchanted deck" seems to have failed! All then clears up during the draw, of course, and it has a nice, almost magical quality to see one hand after the other improve to the sort of hand seemingly requested by the audience.

It may be a matter of experience and personal liking how far you want to take these things (I have on occasion asked for a *"very small number"* making even the Four-of-a-Kinds with Twos and Threes appear on cue, but that might be overtaxing the concept a bit). In any case I suggest "Fairy Tale Poker" is a good opportunity to experiment, because of the built-in safety net: No matter how many verbal goodies and small bonus effects you eventually try out, and no matter how well it all goes, you will always have a table full of impressive Poker hands, and the appearance of the four Aces in your own hand always provides a solid ending.

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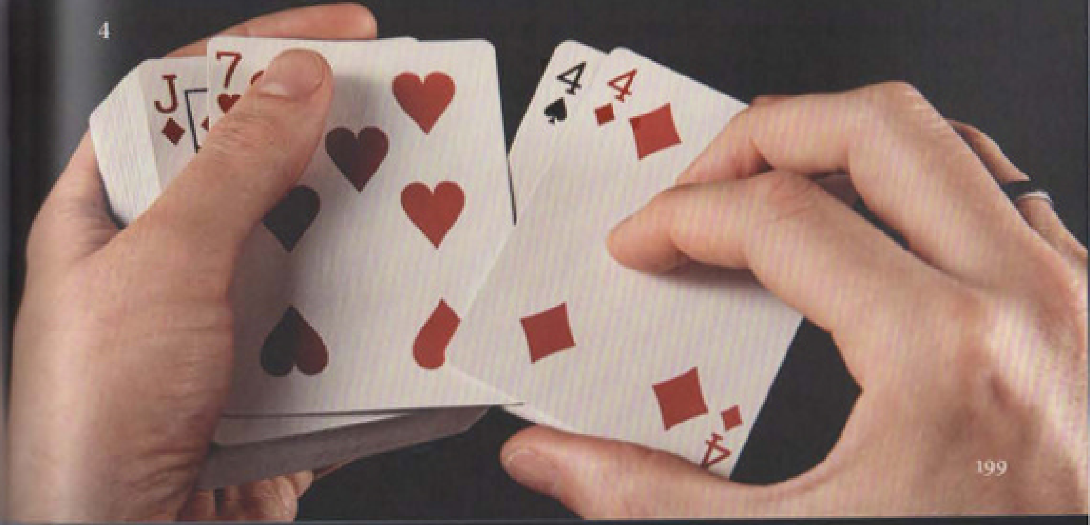
[6] The question *"Which hand would you like to get in a game?"* has occasionally prompted the answer *"Four Aces."* Should this occur, you can milk the situation, and later reveal that the "enchanted deck" has given you exactly the hand the spectator has freely named.



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Quick Change

Quick Change

In the Tamariz stack, four cards of the Royal Flush in Spades have neighbours that are themselves four cards of a Straight Flush. This observation led to this fun little trick. The first phase is a quick demonstration of skill, the second a rather visual surprise.

While this is the section for stack-dependent tricks using the Tamariz stack, "Quick Change" can also be performed with the Aronson stack (see the comments).

EFFECT

A card is removed from the deck and shown. The performer quickly cuts four packets from the deck. The cards on the faces perfectly complement the selection to make a strong Poker hand.

The exercise is repeated under more difficult conditions: A new card is selected and the performer announces he will try to find the four cards that form the best possible hand with the selection – all four at the same time, in one second, with only one hand, and without looking.

The card is shown and the performer holds the four packets under the table with one hand. When he comes and out again a split second later, the cards on the faces have changed: Together with the new selection they now form the Royal Flush in Spades.

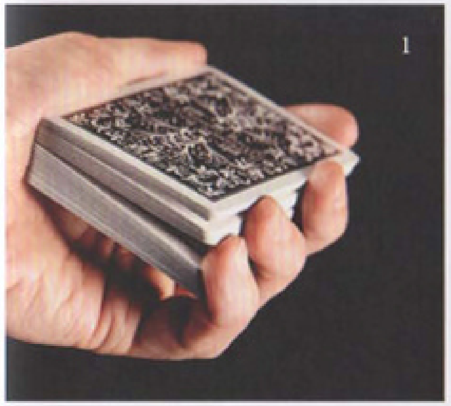
METHOD OVERVIEW

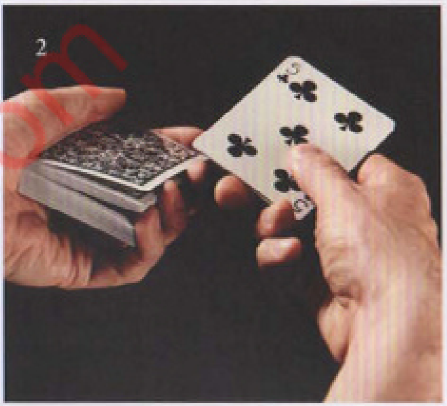
The selections are both forced. When the four packets are cut in the first phase, each already gets a card of the Royal Flush secretly loaded underneath. To change the cards under the table, the packets are simply turned over.

PERFORMANCE

To give the trick some context and interest begin by telling the spectators about magic conventions and late-night magic sessions *"where the really interesting things happen"* and how magicians sometimes have friendly contests among each other. As an example, you demonstrate the "discipline" of locating cards quickly.

Start by forcing the Six of Clubs: Take a break above the Six (third from the bottom) and swing cut the deck to bring the break roughly to the centre of the deck. From here execute a riffle or dribble force and have the spectator remove the Six from the deck without showing it yet (you can lose the break, it is no longer needed).





Explain the rules of the exercise: Your task is to find four cards that, together with the selection, form a good Poker hand. Openly riffle up the inner end of the deck, apparently to get a rough overview of the positions of the cards. In fact, use the opportunity to take a fourth-finger break under the Nine of Clubs (a bit above the centre) and a third-finger break under the Five of Clubs (close to the top of the deck) (Photo 1).[1]

With the cards apparently roughly memorized (and the breaks firmly in place) have the spectator reveal her card, the Six of Clubs. Make a small pause and then cut to the four complementing cards in brisk succession as follows:

Cut off the small packet above the first break. Slide the right thumb under and on the face of the packet turning the packet face up lengthwise to reveal the Five of Clubs (Photo 2). At the same time take a new break with the left third finger under

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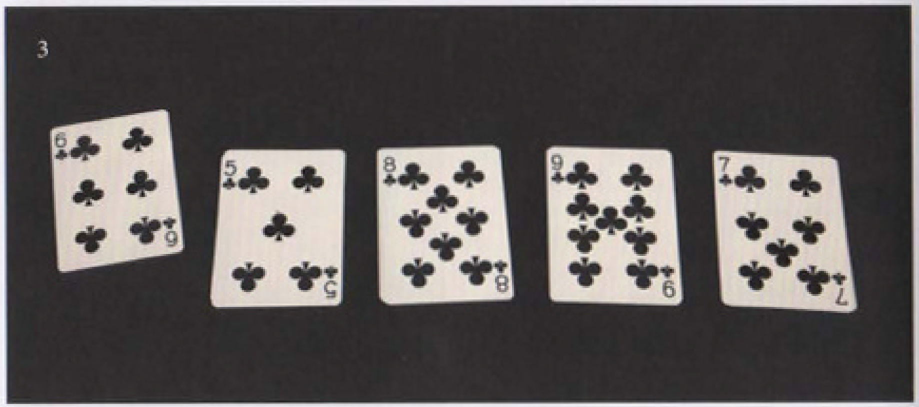
[1] I found it helpful to think of the number 95 to remind me of those two cards when I have not performed "Quick Change" for a while.



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the top card of the rest of the deck. (I use Harvey Rosenthal's Pop Up Move[2] also shown in Photo 2. Alternatively you can also use the left thumb to pull the top card inwards a little bit, forming a very small in-jog.)

As you momentarily place the face-up packet over the deck to square it, secretly add the top card from the rest of the deck under the packet. Place the packet onto the table a little towards your left with the face-down card secretly hidden underneath.

The next "packet" is very small: Openly push over two cards with the left thumb. Again, take a break under the next card as you turn the two-card-packet face up to show the Eight of Clubs. As before, briefly place the two-card packet onto the deck to square it and secretly add the top card of the rest of the deck under it. Place the packet (now three cards) onto the table a bit to the right of the first packet.

Repeat the exact same steps again: Cut to the break turn the packet face up (showing the Nine of Clubs), add the next card underneath and place the packet down in third position.

Finally push over two cards again, showing the Seven of Clubs, add the next card under the packet and place everything at the right end of the row. You have located the Five, Eight, Nine and Seven of Clubs, which together with the selected Six of Clubs make an impressive Straight Flush (Photo 3). At my speed the whole sequence takes about ten seconds.

Make a short pause and accept any reaction the feat might have caused.

Mention that this was the *"basic version"* of the exercise, and that you will now attempt the same but under much more challenging conditions: This time, whatever card they choose, you will try to locate *"the four cards that make the best possible hand with your card, all four at the same time, in one second, with one hand and without looking!"*

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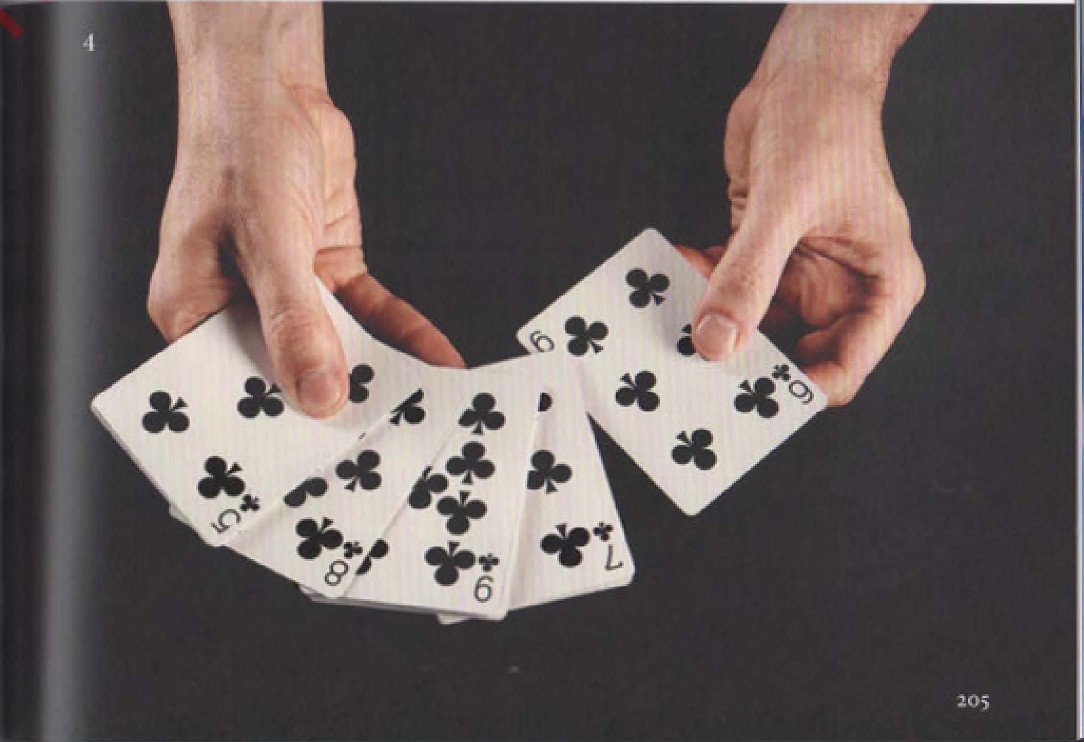
[2] "The Pop Up Move", *Packet Switches (Part Three)* (Fulves, Rosenthal, 1977) page 184.

Pick up the rest of the deck and briefly spread the cards between your hands, taking a break above the Ace of Spades (tenth from the top). Force that card and have the spectator keep it face down for the time being.

Turn your attention back to the four piles on the table: Pick up the packet on the right (with the Seven of Clubs on the face) and place it into your left hand (taking care not to flash the reversed card underneath). One by one take the next three packets and place them with the first, adjusting everything to eventually hold the packets in the right hand in a little spread (Photo 4). As you say: *"You picked the Six of Clubs, and that made a Straight Flush"*, momentarily add the Six to the four packets, displaying the complete Straight Flush (Photo 4 again). Place the Six to the side again and regrip the four-packet-fan with the left hand holding it as shown in (Photo 5). This frees your right hand to turn over the new selection: The Ace of Spades.

Outline your task again, pointing out that since the card is an Ace, the best possible hand to make with it is a Royal Flush. In other words, you are looking for the Ten, Jack, Queen and King of Spades – all at the same time, in one second, with one hand and without looking.

Take the spread of four packets with the right hand again, this time with the fingers on top and the thumb underneath. Tentatively take a peek in the rest of deck, as if



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getting ready to locate the four required cards from there, and after a short pause move the right hand with its cards under the table. Once out of sight, turn your hand palm up and immediately come out again, scraping the cards along the edge of the table to make a distinct sound. All four cards have changed (Photo 6), and you immediately add the Ace to display the Royal Flush (Photo 7).

RETURNING HOME

Place the Ace of Spades aside. Push the spread of the four packets together and square everything in the left hand (the Queen of Spades is on the face of the packet). During the reaction, when attention is still low, spread through the packet and simply turn all groups of face-down cards face up in place (Photo 8 shows this in process, as the second group of face-down cards is being turned face up). While this is highly illogical (there should not be any reversed cards), if you just do it without trying to hide anything, it will just go unnoticed. Place the packet on the face of the rest of the deck.

Replace the Ace of Spades and Six of Clubs at their positions (the Six goes to second from the top of the deck) and the deck is back in memorized order.

COMMENTS

"Quick Change" from the Aronson stack

Given that the Aronson stack has a variety of perfect Poker deals already built-

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in and gives a whole range of impressive gambling-themed effects, I am not sure if a little item like this is of much interest, but just for the sake of completeness, here is how to perform "Quick Change" from the Aronson stack in very much the same way as from the Tamariz stack:

To prepare slip cut the top card (Jack of Spades) under the Five of Spades (twentieth from the top). To perform, take a break above the Nine of Diamonds (the bottom card) and swing cut about two thirds of the deck to bring the break to roughly a third from the top. Force the Nine using a dribble force or riffle force (you can lose the break afterwards).

Openly riffle up the inner end of the deck apparently getting a rough impression of the position of the cards, in fact taking a fourth-finger break under the Nine of Spades (a bit above the centre) and a third-finger break under the Nine of Hearts (thirteen cards further up).

Have the selected card shown – the Nine of Diamonds. Cut the deck to four cards as follows: The first cut goes to the first break to reveal the Nine of Hearts. Place the packet down (each time, secretly add the next card under the packet as described). Spread and turn over four cards in a small packet. This reveals the Nine of Clubs. Add the next card under the packet and place it next to the first. The next cut goes to the second break and shows the Nine of Spades. Pause briefly (you have built a four-of-a-kind with Nines) and, as if treating it just as a formality to complete a five-card hand, say: *"And maybe an Ace."* Spread over four cards again to reveal the Ace of Clubs.

The force card for the repeat will be the Jack of Spades. It is tenth from the top just as in the above handling, so from here you can continue exactly as described. Just as with the Tamariz stack the cards will change into the Royal Flush in Spades. (The return home is also very much the same.)

Under Water

Here is a slightly different presentation for "Quick Change": After the first demonstration, offer to repeat the exercise, but this time bet that you will find four cards *"all at the same time, in one second, with one hand, without looking – and under water!"*

After milking the situation appropriately, this is easily accomplished through an old trick: When the moment comes, hold the small four-packet fan in one hand, look away, and with the other hand reach for a glass of water that you had prepared. Simply hold the glass over the packets and turn over your hand (the one with the packets, not the one with the glass!). Nobody can deny that you have found all four cards together, in one second, with one hand, without looking – and under water! While decidedly less magical, this version is still quite surprising and can also get very strong reactions.

Poker Night at the Improv

Poker Night at the Improv

This is a fun little monster of a routine. It is a full performance piece best described as a version of "Suit Appearance" done with Poker hands instead of single cards. (Oh, and there is a selection as well.)

Stackwise, it all takes place in that beautiful landscape five faros away from home.

EFFECT

In a feat of improvisation and card control, the performer produces increasingly strong Poker hands from a shuffled deck in a variety of showy ways, all the while trying to make a spectator forget his selected card.

When all else fails, the performer hands the last few cards to the spectator to deal for a game of Poker. Not only does the spectator find he dealt himself a winning Royal Flush, he is also left with exactly one remaining card – his selection!

METHOD OVERVIEW

The Tamariz stack is altered to reach a special set-up that allows producing a variety of Poker hands. After the performance everything can be brought back into memorized order.

PREPARATION

Remove the Four of Clubs from the deck

The first card of the stack is not used in this routine. You may want to palm it out and leave it in a pocket, or momentarily place the deck into the card case and leave the Four behind when you take the cards out again.

Exchange the two red Jacks

I recommend the handling by Áriston that was already used in "Fairy Tale Poker": Cut the Jack of Hearts to the top. Take a break above the Jack of Diamonds (twelve cards further down). Hold the deck in the right hand in position for a face-down overhand shuffle, maintaining the break with the right thumb. With the left thumb peel the top card into the left hand. Throw the packet above the break on top of the single card, run another single card and finally throw the rest of the deck on top. You have exchanged the two red Jacks while giving the deck a straight cut. (You may want to follow the actual exchange of the two cards with a short lift shuffle.)

Give the deck a triple antifaro

This consists of dealing the deck into eight piles and picking them up in a certain order. If you want to do this preparation in front of an audience, this part is easily done under the pretext of a quick effect: Announce a "warm-up exercise for your memory" and spread the deck face down. Have a spectator remove any card from the spread and place it aside sight unseen. As you gather the spread, place the left thumb on the position where the card was removed, take a break and cut the deck at that spot. Hold the deck face down and very quickly deal the cards into eight piles (two rows of four), turning them face up in the process as you pretend to remember the cards in groups. Continue until you are left with the last two cards (Photo 1). At this point pause and say: *"I have seen every card except the…"* A look at the last card dealt (on the bottom right pile) will tell you where you are: Name the three next cards in the sequence (in any order other than the one they are actually in). Show the two cards in your hand, pause again and repeat the missing card of the

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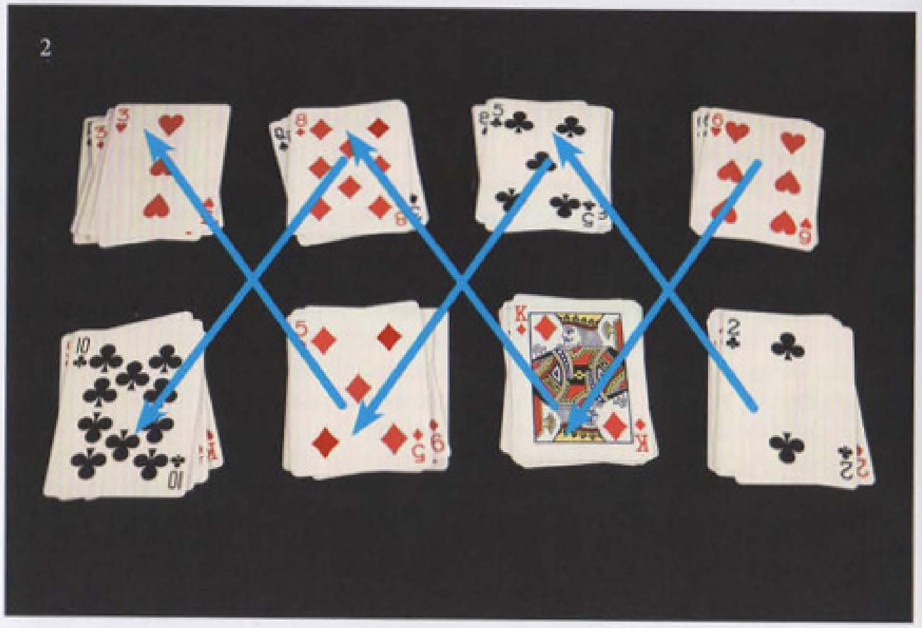
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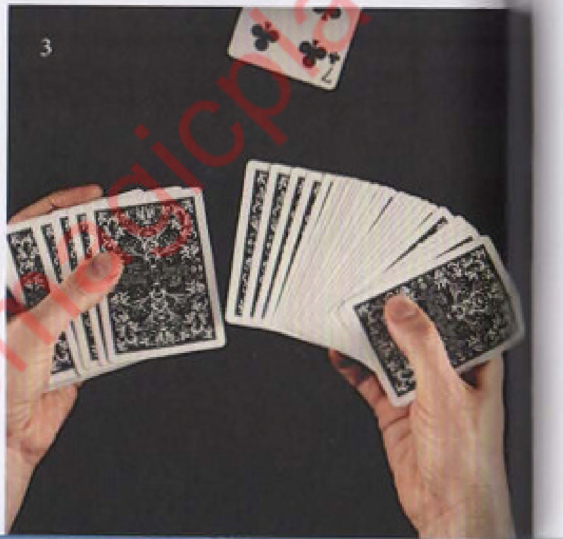
three and have the spectator show his card to confirm your amazing memory. During the reaction place the three cards on their respective piles (one, two and three, just as if continuing the deal) and pick up the piles in the typical antifaro zigzag pattern (eight on three on six on one, then four on seven on two on five, and then the two resulting piles together in any order. See Photo 2). You have just done a quick little trick and given the deck the equivalent of five faro shuffles.[1]

Exchange the Ace of Hearts and the Five of Hearts
The two are next to each other, so just casually spread through the deck as if double checking that you remembered everything correctly and exchange the two when you come to them (cull the Five and immediately re-introduce it under the Ace to keep the exchange invisible).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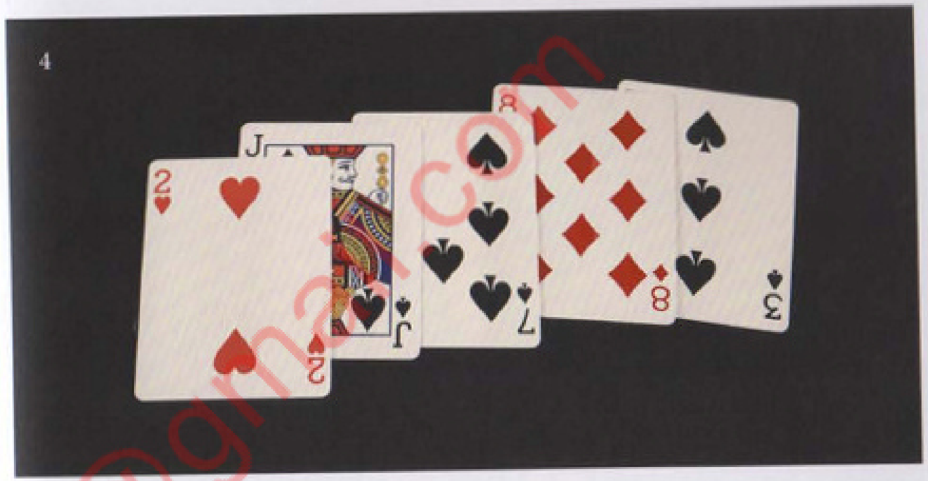
[1] For more on the antifaro concept see Juan Tamariz's seminal study in *Sonata* (Tamariz, 1989) page 90.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Cut the Jack of Hearts to the face
No need to look far: The Jack of Hearts is three cards before the Ace and Five.

Whether you have done the preparation beforehand or seemingly just memorized the deck (oh, the irony!), you are now ready for the:

PERFORMANCE

Take a break above the Seven of Clubs, currently twenty-first from the top, and force that card on a spectator (you can lose the break afterwards; it is not needed anymore). Ask him to show the card to the rest of the group. As he does so swing cut about half of the deck into the left hand and spread both halves a bit in preparation for the return of the card. On the left half, spread the top four cards, ready to take a break under them (Photo 3). Retrieve the selection on top of the left hand half and close the spread maintaining the break four cards below it. After a pause double or triple undercut to the break, sending the Seven of Clubs to the fifth position from the bottom.[2]

"Usually", you say, *"I would now find your selection. But this time, I will try to distract you until you have completely forgotten your card. Then I won't have to find it. Brilliant!*[3] *So, let's see. Do you play Poker at all?"*

Deal the top five cards onto the table face up overlapping from right to left (Photo 4).

One Pair
Say: *"The lowest hand in Poker is One Pair."* Pick up the Three of Spades from the table and take a break under the top card of the deck (Two of Spades). Change the Three into the Two using Marc DeSouza's

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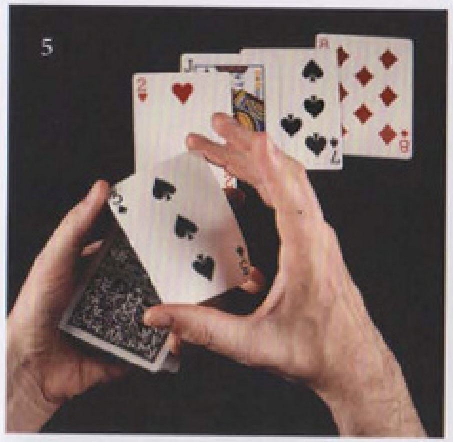
[2] Instead of a double or triple undercut I actually use the "Chaos Cut" at this point. A description can be found in *The Book* (Fraps and Willich, 1998), page 115.

[3] I first saw this plot used by Helge Thun, for Derek Dingle's "Too Many Cards", see *The Complete Works of Derek Dingle* (Kaufman, 1982), page 106.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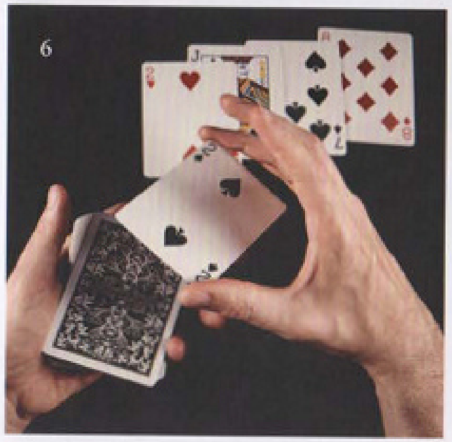
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Shapeshifter Change (in this change the two cards are held back to back and quickly snapped over together, resulting in a startling visual change, see Photo 5 and 6).[4] Unload the Three on top of the deck and place the Two of Spades onto the Two of Hearts displaying a pair of deuces.

Triple cut the top card (Three of Spades) to the bottom as you say *"Of course, you can always get a pair just by hitting the deck. Maybe something a bit higher, let's see..."* Slap the deck with your right hand (Photo 7) and turn over the top two cards to show a Pair of Kings (Photo 8). Drop them face up onto the cards on the table (this is going to be the "discard" pile; all used cards go here). *"It's true, look: If you don't hit the deck..."* stay motionless for a moment and continue: *"...you won't get a Pair."* Again turn over the top two cards showing nothing special (a Ten and Four) to prove your point (?). Again drop the two cards face up onto the others on the table.

Two Pair

You will find two pair (Queens and Fours) just above the bottom card. As for all the productions in this routine, you can substitute any other provided you don't change the order of the cards. The production I use for Two Pair is one of Steve Beam's.[5] It is one of my all-time favourites and it goes like this:

Cut four cards from the bottom to the top. Take a break above the bottom third of the deck approximately, and with your left thumb slip first the top and then the next card onto the bottom third of the deck, holding a break between the two cards. (Position check: The top card of the deck is the Queen of Clubs. You are holding a break between the Four of Hearts and the Queen of Spades, approximately two thirds down. The bottom card is the Four of Spades.)

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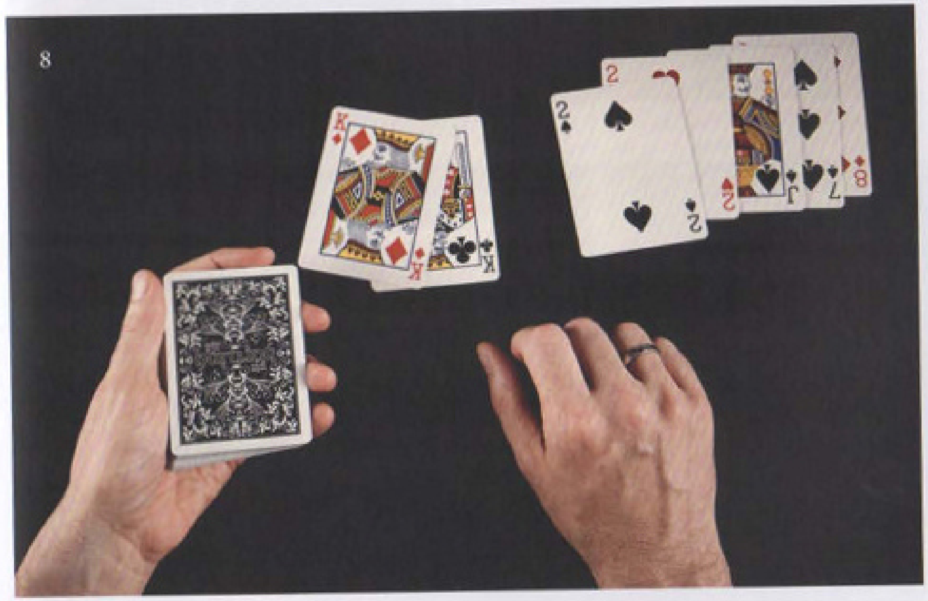
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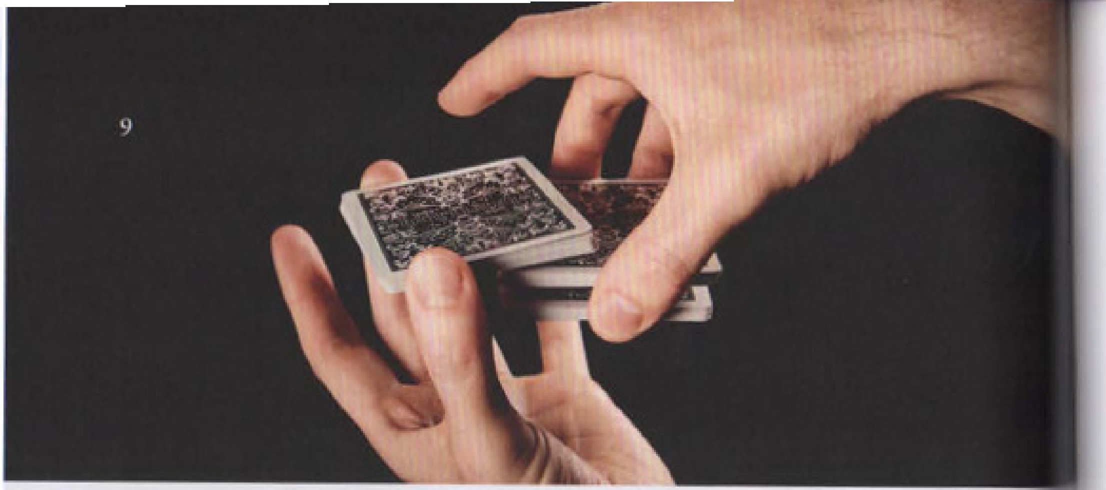
[4] "Shapeshifter Change", *Trapdoor* issue 48 (Beam, 1993).

[5] "Beam's Choice", *Card Tricks from Mount Olympus* (Beam, 1979)



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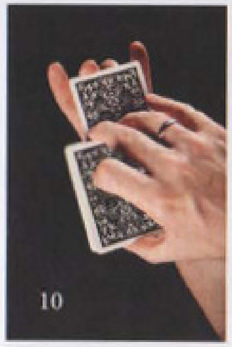

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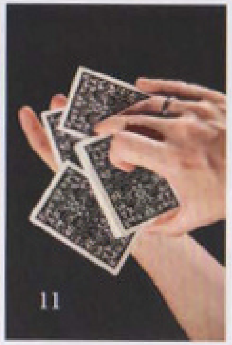

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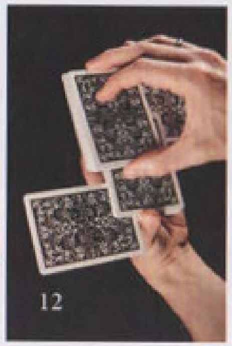

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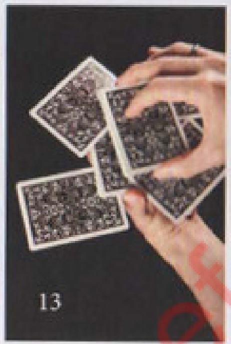

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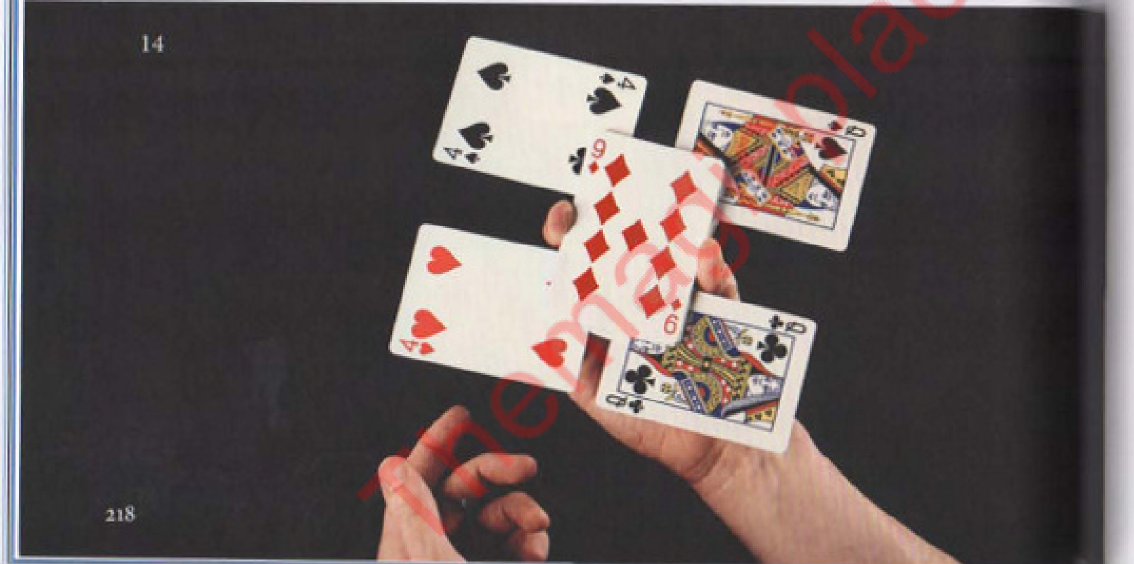

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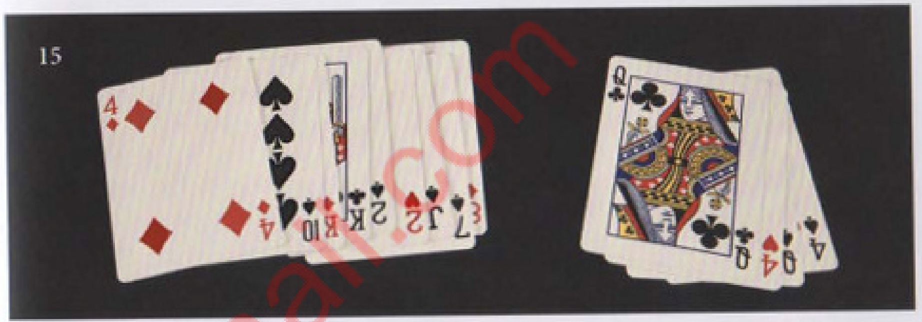

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Hold the deck in right hand end grip, the thumb taking over the break. Swing cut about one third of the deck into the left hand, which receives the packet from below holding it at the short sides between second finger and thumb (Photo 9). The packets are now positioned as shown in (Photo 10): The right second finger contacts the top card of the left-hand packet, while the left thumb contacts the bottom card of the right-hand packet. Keeping those contacts the right hand moves in an arc to the right and forwards. This causes the bottom card of the right-hand packet and the top card of the left-hand packet to swivel outwards, turning around the right thumb and left second finger, respectively (Photo 11). At the end of the movement, the two cards stand out at right angles at two corners of the deck. Clip them between the two packets to hold them securely in place and move the right hand away with the packet above the break.

With two cards produced, a similar movement is now executed from the top left corner: Hold the packets as shown in (Photo 12): The right thumb contacts the top card of the left-hand packet, while the left second finger contacts the bottom card of the right-hand packet. This time, the right hand moves to the right and backwards, causing those two cards to move out, this time pivoting around the right second finger and the left thumb, respectively (Photo 13). Grip everything with the right hand and turn the hand over to reveal Two Pair, Fours and Queens, in a pretty display (Photo 14).

After letting the production register, pull the four protruding cards from the deck with the left hand in the order Four of Spades, Queen of Spades, Four of Hearts, Queen of Clubs. (This is easy to remember if you realize that in the current state of the deck the stack numbers increase in steps of eight: Each card is eight further than the previous one.) After removing the four cards cut the deck to bring the Three of Spades to the face again.[6]

The Two Pairs Queens and Fours are not placed onto the face-up discard pile, but rather to the right of it (Photo 15). The reason for this will become apparent in a minute.

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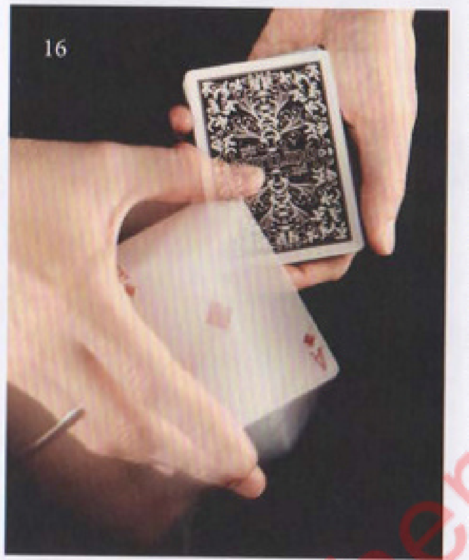
[6] As you take the Queen of Clubs from the deck, you may lift it a bit and momentarily take a break with the right thumb at that position. The Three of Spades is one card below that break, so you can easily adjust and cut it to the bottom without having to look for it.

Pause to ask the spectator: *"Do you remember your card?"* When he says he does, say: *"I'll have to continue, then. The next strongest Poker hand is a Three-of-a-Kind."*

Three-of-a-Kind

This hand is ready on top of the deck: The top five cards are three Sixes with an Ace and a King. As usual, you can produce this hand in any way you see fit. Here is what I do: Mention that Three-of-a-Kind has been called "The devil's hand" or "hand from hell" because it is easy to lose a lot of money with it. As you talk, casually spread the cards and take a break under the top five cards. Use Art Altman's Double Undercut Palm (or any other technique to that effect) to bring the five to the bottom and palm them in the left hand in the process[7]. Place the deck onto the table and go under the table with the left hand. Place the right hand flat on the deck and squeeze, and a moment later come out from under the table with the left hand revealing the cards. Apparently you have squeezed the cards through the table. Turn the cards face up to reveal a Three-of-a-Kind. (At this point I mention the expression "devil's hand" again, pointing out the three sixes.) Place the hand face up onto the table in front of you.



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Full House

Continuing in the vein of improvisation, remark that a Three-of-a-Kind can easily become a Full House. Take a break under the top card of the deck (the Ace of Diamonds), take the King of Spades and momentarily place it onto the deck as you speak. Pick up the two cards above the break as one and hold them in the right hand from above between the thumb and the third finger at the index corners. Swiftly move the hand back and fourth at the same time using the first and second fingers to secretly turn the double over. The small movement is hidden by the broader gesture of shaking the card, and the King has more or less visibly changed into an Ace (Photo 16).[8] Place the double (Ace of Diamonds with a reversed King of Spades hidden underneath) onto the packet with the three Sixes and everything together on top of the discards (onto the Four of Diamonds).

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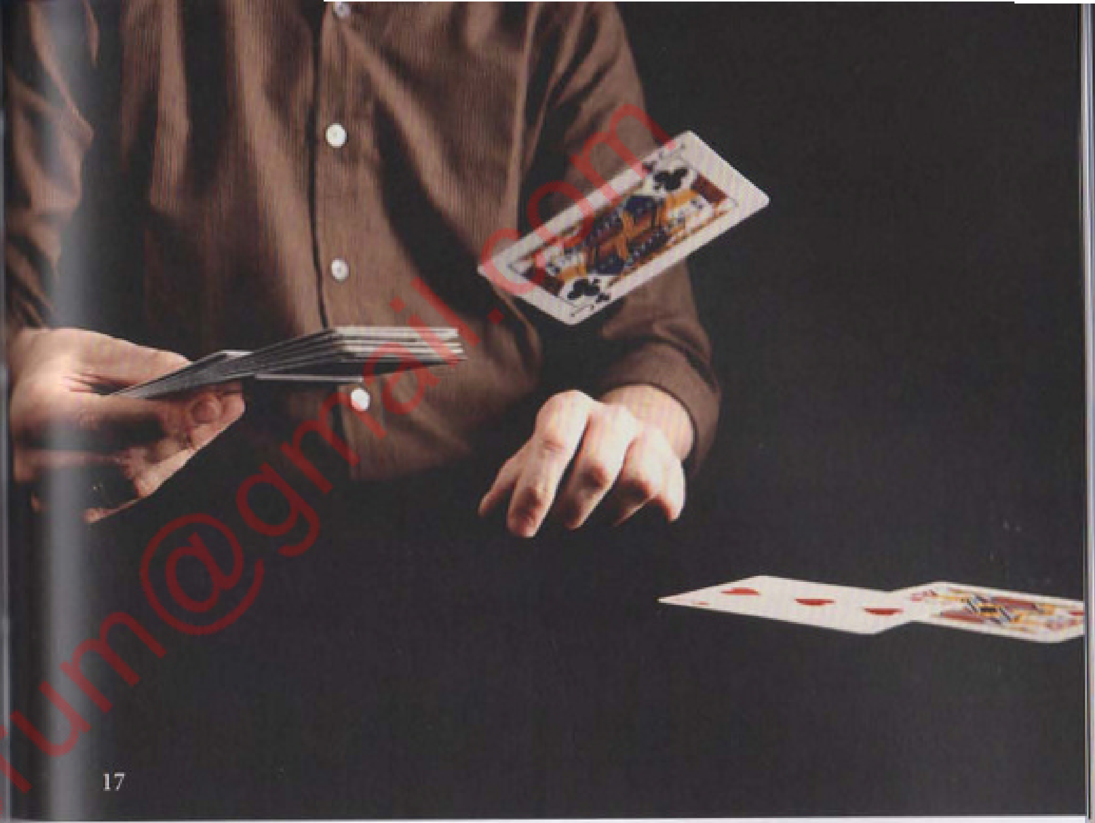
[7] "The Art Altman Technique", *Marlo Magazine Volume 4* (Marlo, 1980) page 72. A good description can also be found in Darwin Ortiz' *Cardshark* (Ortiz, 1995) page 134.

[8] This is Noel Stanton's "Pivot Colour Change" from The Gen, Vol. 20 Number 2, June 1964.



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Ask the spectator whether he still knows his card. When he confirms, continue:

"Well, that was cheating anyway. Let's find a real Full House." Again, the hand is already waiting on top of the deck and as usual, you can use any production to make the five cards appear. I use Le Paul's fun "Gymnastic Aces".[9] Briefly: Cut off a little less than half of the cards and faro shuffle them into the rest, keeping the smaller packet outjogged for about two thirds of its length. Pinch the telescoped packets at the bottom short side between the thumb on the back and the fingers on the face and gently shake the packet until the top card of the outer part loosens and flies out (Photo 17). This is repeated until all five cards have leapt from the deck. (After the production you can either openly strip out the remaining outjogged cards and replace them on top of the deck or let the cards spring together at an angle as in a false riffle shuffle and secretly strip them out and replace them on top.)

If necessary arrange the five cards in the

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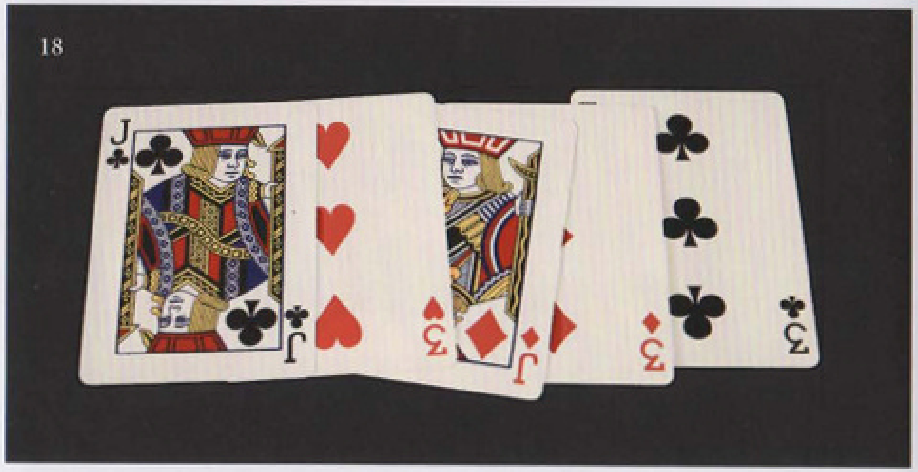
[9] "Gymnastic Aces", *The Card Magic of Le Paul* (Le Paul, 1949), page 207.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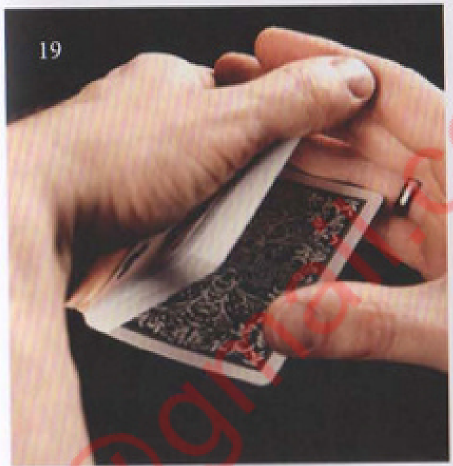
order they appeared[10] and place them onto the table overlapping face up (Photo 18).

Address the spectator again: *"Do you remember your card?"* and once more use his affirmative answer as the reason to keep going. (*"Ok, we'll go on then!"*) This running gag will become increasingly funnier. During this little exchange, hold the packet from above in end grip with the right hand and secretly push the bottom card to the right with your left fingers. Turn your left hand palm down, still holding the rest of the packet. This will turn the packet face up over the bottom card (Photo 19). You end with the packet face up, held with the palm-down left hand, and the Three of Spades reversed on the bottom.

(Alternatively, you can also move the left thumb under the packet and use it to slide out the bottom card towards the left and around the left side of the packet until it comes to rest face up on top of the deck. Then turn your left hand palm down to hide the reversed card. This move takes about one second and is done with your left hand briefly lowered into your lap.)

Four-of-a-Kind
Mention that with a bit of luck a Full House can turn into a Four-of-a-Kind. To demonstrate, pick up the Jack of Clubs and place it face up onto the packet (turning the left hand palm up only at the last moment to keep the face-up Three hidden from view). Execute a Houdini/Erdnase Change to change the Jack to the Three of Spades.[11]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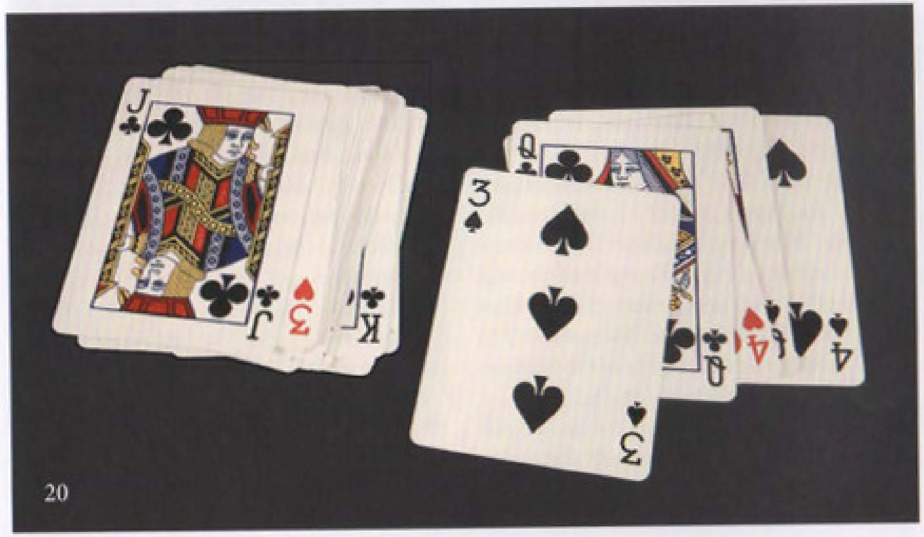
After briefly displaying the fourth Three, turn the double face down onto the deck and take the top card into the right hand. Spin it on your finger or give it a little snap and show that it was all just an illusion: The card has changed back to the Jack. Place the Jack back onto the Three of Hearts on the table and the whole hand onto the discard pile (onto the Ace of Diamonds).

Almost as an afterthought remove the Three of Spades from your pocket (do not forget to palm it off the top of the deck, first).

Place the Three onto the Queen of Clubs (on top of the small packet just to the right; Photo 20) and slide the whole small packet from the right (Fours, Queens and the Three of Spades) under the discard pile.

Once more ask the spectator if he remembers his card. He does, so you keep going.

Again, remark that the last Four-of-a-Kind was cheating, and announce to find a "real one". Again, that hand is already prepared: Four Nines are ready on top of the deck.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[10] In case the five cards get all over the place during the production, the fact that the stack numbers always increase by eight makes it easy to put them back in order. Remembering that the Jack of Hearts has been switched for the Jack of Diamonds, that order is: Three of Clubs, (stack number 4) Three of Diamonds (12), Jack of Diamonds (usually Jack of Hearts – 20), Three of Hearts (28) and Jack of Clubs (36).

[11] I use Alex Elmsley's now standard handling published under the title of "Transformation with Outjog" in *The Collected Works of Alex Elmsley Vol. 1* (Minch, 1991), page 137.

21

Riffle through the packet, seemingly refreshing your memory, and then make the top four cards appear with the method of your choice (as the previous hand was produced one card at a time, for the sake of variety and to keep everything moving, I recommend a "flash" production that produces all four cards at once). I use Christian Scherer's "Blitz Asse"[12] (Photo 21), but any of the numerous four-card productions will do as long as it leaves the rest of the packet unchanged. Place the four Nines on top of the discard pile in their original Clubs, Diamonds, Spades, Hearts order.

By now, simply giving your spectator an inquiring look will trigger his response: No, he still hasn't forgotten his card!

Straight

Casually spread the packet between your hands and use the opportunity to take a break under the top six cards. There are only very few cards left and you still haven't found the selection – time to take other measures!

"I think it's time for the best hand of them all: A Straight!" Pause a beat and continue: *"Not just any Straight of course; that would be too easy. If I wanted a normal Straight I could find one just like that. No, I mean the Ten to Ace of one suit – the Royal Flush!"* To the words: *"…I could find one just like that"*, briskly riffle the front of the packet, take the six cards above the break with the right hand and snap them into a small fan (Photo 22). Allow just a short glimpse before placing the packet onto the discard-pile. This is a little bluff – there is one card too many and there is no Nine – but done with a bit of Chutzpa and keeping the cards in motion, the miscalling will go unquestioned. In fact, I found treating this as throwaway moment as described brings a reaction way out of proportion to the actual effect.

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[12] "Blitz Asse" in *Seminarheft* (Scherer, 1982) page 3.

22

Finale: Selected card and Royal Flush

Give the small packet a short false shuffle, pretending to calculate and arrange the cards in a certain way before handing the packet to your spectator who would not forget his selected card!

Instruct the spectator to deal the first card to the table to a first imaginary player face up. The next card he deals to a second player, also face up. Finally, he deals a card to himself face down. Ask him to continue in this manner, dealing three Poker hands, two face up and one face down to himself. As he deals, hesitatingly say: *"I hope we still have enough cards!?"* Turns out, there are enough cards; in fact, at the end of the deal the spectator will be left with exactly one card in his hand.

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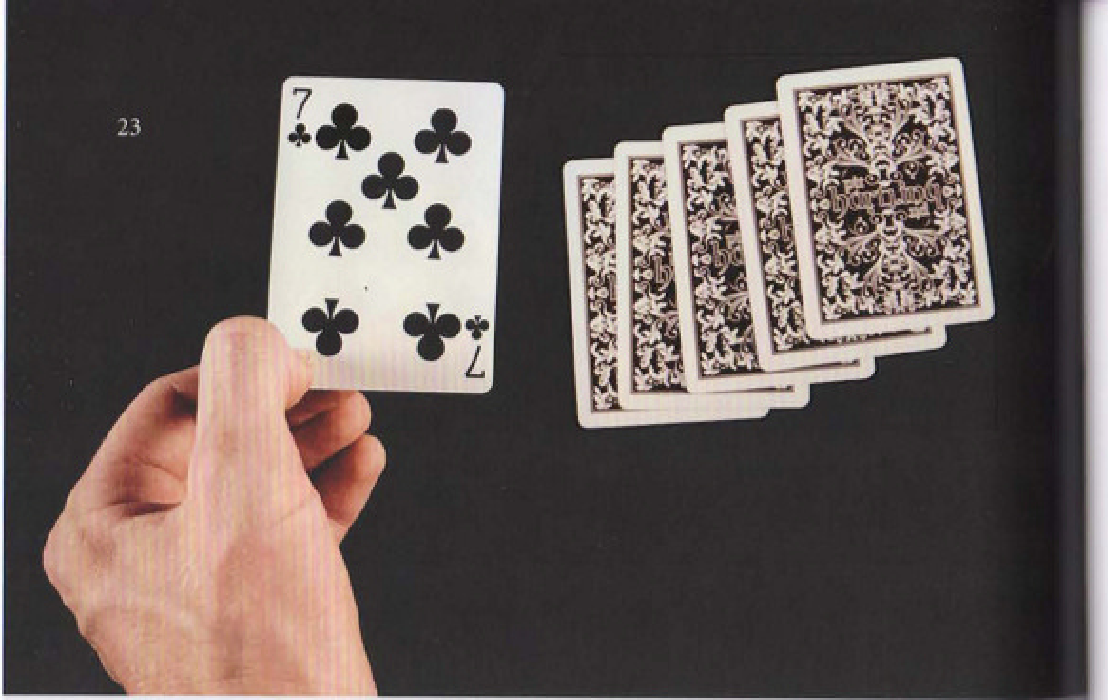

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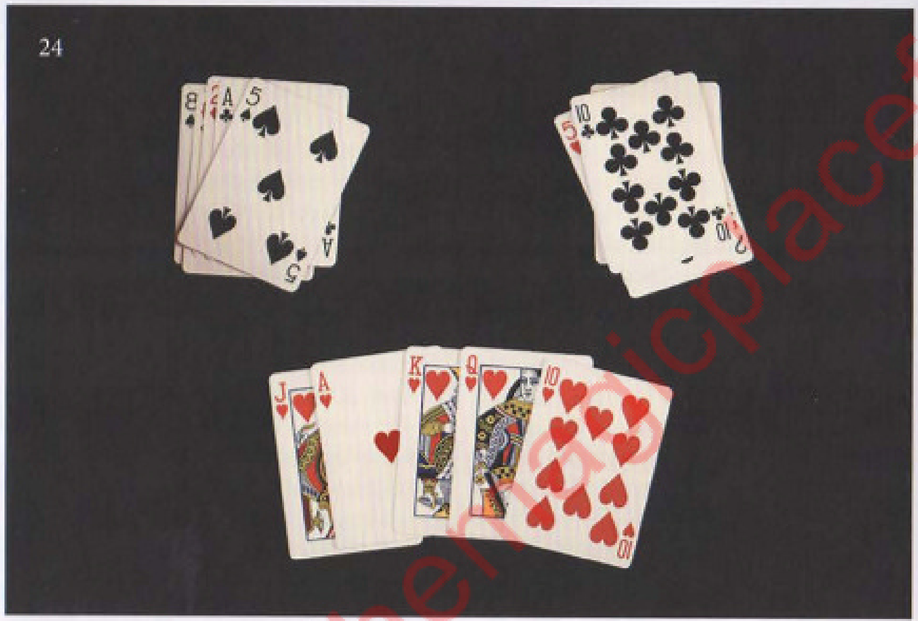

Excitedly ask him one last time whether he remembers his card. By now everyone knows what's coming so let him name his card and show the card to the group: The single last card in the deck is none other than his selection (Photo 23).

Pause just a beat and with an air of *"and of course..."* reach over and turn his hand face up to reveal the Royal Flush in Hearts to finish (Photo 24).

RETURNING HOME

At the end of the routine, a small group of cards was dealt to three players. The first step on the way back home is to undo this deal (the selected Seven of Clubs is left aside for the moment):

As you display the Royal Flush in Hearts, invert the order of the five cards (the Ten of Hearts will end on the back and the Jack of Hearts on the face of the packet). Place the Royal Flush onto the packet with the Ten of Clubs on the face and both together on the third hand. Hold the combined packet face down and deal the cards into five piles, turning each card face up in the process. At the end each pile will have three cards (the situation is shown in Photo 25). As usual, this is done during the reaction. Mumbling something about *"better mix those up a bit"* will be all the motivation needed at this point. Collect the face-up piles one on top of the other starting with the one with the Jack of Hearts on the face (the Jack will end on the face of the combined packet) and place everything on top of the rest of the deck.[13]

Next, the remaining small changes are undone:

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[13] This is another example of the principle that a deal of x packets of y cards each is reset by dealing y packets of x cards each. See also the Returning Home - section of "The Poker Formulas" on page 110.

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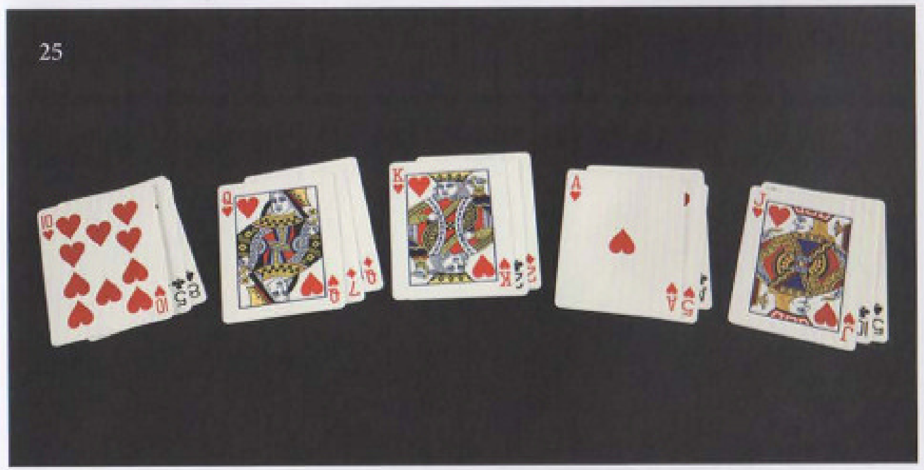

Pick up the Seven of Clubs and hold it face up in the right hand. Spread the deck face up over the Seven, the Seven riding under the spread just as if it had been culled. Exchange the Ace and Five of Hearts (fourth and fifth from the face of the deck). Keep spreading to just below the middle of the deck where you will find one card reversed. Insert the Seven of Clubs one card to the right of the reversed card (between the Ace of Diamonds and the Three of Clubs). Openly turn the reversed card (King of Spades) face up. (Nobody will question this; it will just seem like a card was accidentally reversed.) Go back a few cards and take a break above the Jack of Diamonds. Repeat the handling described earlier to swap back the two red Jacks: Hold the face-up deck in the right hand in position for an overhand shuffle, maintaining the break with the right thumb. With the left thumb peel the Jack of Hearts into the left hand. Throw the packet above the break on top of the Jack, run another single card (the Jack of Diamonds) and throw the rest of the deck on top.

Done calmly and without haste, the actions up to here take less than thirty seconds.

If you now do three faro shuffles everything will be back in memorized order. (Don't forget to replace the Four of Clubs.)

Alternate procedure for undoing the Royal Flush Deal

The above method for restacking the three hands of the Royal Flush once more exemplifies the standard procedure (resetting x piles of y cards each by dealing y packets of x cards each), and it works absolutely fine. In actual practice, however, I use a different method that you may or may not prefer. It goes like this:

Pick up the Royal Flush, hold it face up and use it to scoop up the face-up previous hand (the one with the Ten of Clubs on the face). Hold the ten cards face up in position for an overhand shuffle and give the packet a milk shuffle: With the left hand, peel off the top and bottom cards together. Do this three more times and end by placing the last two cards together on top. Keep the packet face up and use it to scoop up the remaining hand (the one with the Five of Spades on the face). Turn the combined packet face down in position for an overhand shuffle. Shuffle as follows: Run the first two cards singly. On the third shuffle movement take the top two cards together with the left thumb, as well as the bottom card with the fingers (Photo 26). From now on, alternate milk actions and running single cards, so the shuffle goes: Milk, single, milk, single, milk, single and the last single.

Throw everything face up on top of the rest of the deck and continue as described (omit the exchange of the Ace and Five of Hearts – this is already done).

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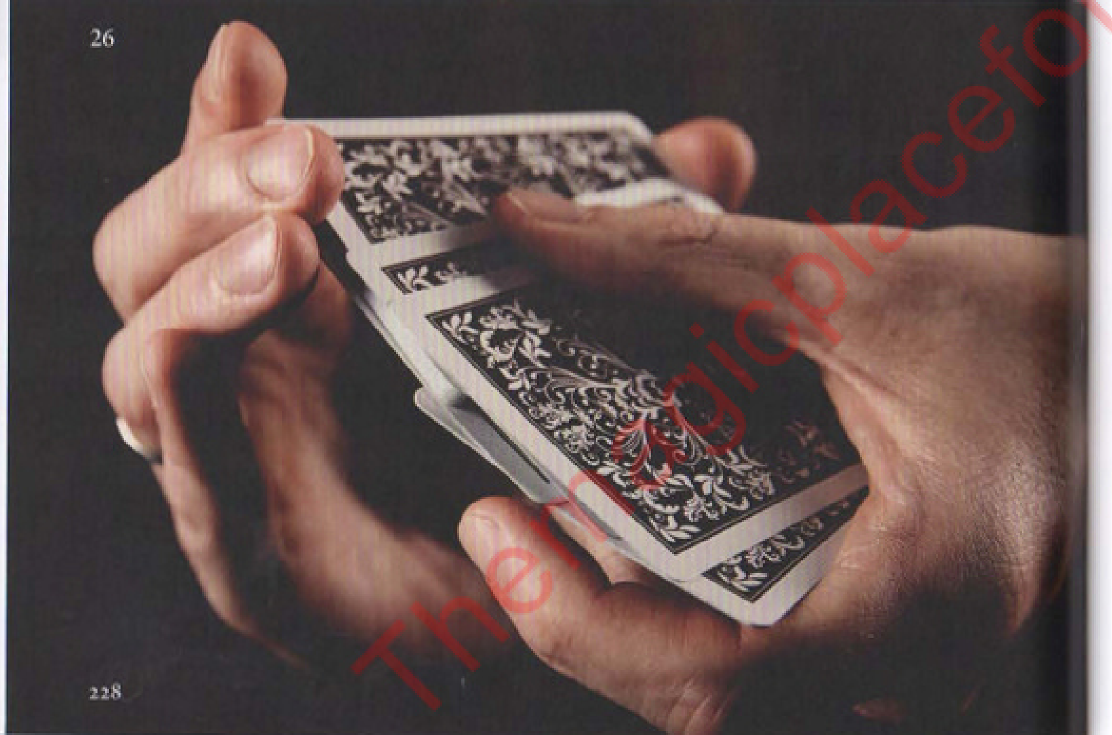


COMMENTS

During its early development "Poker Night at the Improv" went through a couple of stages: Originally, the idea was simply to cut the deck at different places, showing various Poker hands on top. Producing the hands in different ways was suggested by Juan Tamariz. Once more: ¡Gracias, maestro!

The next feature was the discovery/arrangement of the Royal Flush Deal. Only after the spectator could deal himself the Royal Flush did the "Poker" part of the routine have a solid conclusion.

The addition of a selection and the notion of doing all those showy productions just to make the spectator forget his card gave the whole procedure a *raison d'être*, and the running gag of repeatedly asking the spectator if he still knows his card and then "having to continue" lends the routine structure and drives it forward.

The climax, finally, merges the two plotlines: The end of one story is reached when the spectator is left with exactly one card and it turns out to be his selection. The reveal of the Royal Flush (treated as a kicker) marks the natural end of the other storyline: There is no better hand than that.

As you have seen, the technical details of "Poker Night at the Improv" are quite flexible: While I tried to describe the routine exactly as I have been performing it for the last few years, the actual productions can be replaced with different ones as long as the order of the cards is preserved.

At the risk of stating the obvious: It is important for "Poker Night at the Improv" to maintain a good rhythm throughout. To facilitate practice and rehearsal, here's the whole routine broken down in steps:

BARE BONES

PREPARATION

Start with the Tamariz stack.
Remove the Four of Clubs.
Exchange the two red Jacks.
Give the deck five faro shuffles
(or a triple antifaro).
Exchange the Ace of Hearts
and the Five of Hearts.
Cut the Jack of Hearts to the face.

PERFORMANCE

Force the Seven of Clubs
(21st from the top).
Swing cut to have the Seven replaced.
Spread four cards further and cut
the Queen of Clubs to the face.
Deal the top five cards face up onto
the table – a worthless hand.

One Pair (Twos)

Change the Three of Spades into the
Two of Spades (top card of the deck).
Place the Two of Spades on top of the
four cards (onto the Two of Hearts).
Push the five cards to the side.
This will be the discard pile.

A Higher Pair (Kings)

Cut the top card (Three of Spades)
to the bottom.
Slap the deck and show the top two
(Pair of Kings).
Place the two Kings on the discards.
Do not slap the deck and show
the top two: No Pair. (Gag.)
Place the two (a Ten and a Four)
on the discard pile.

Two Pair

Produce the four cards above
the bottom card of the deck
(two Queens and two Fours).
Place the four cards to the right
of the discard pile.

Three-of-a-Kind

Produce the top five cards.

Full House I

Pivot-change the King of Spades
to the Ace of Diamonds
(on top of the deck).
Place both as a double onto the four cards.
Place all together on the discard pile.

Full House II

Produce the top five cards.

Four-of-a-Kind I

Bring the Three of Spades from
the bottom to the top, reversed.
Erdnase-change the Jack of Clubs
into the Three of Spades.
Turn the double face down
and change back into the Jack.
Place the Jack onto the four cards
and all together on the discards.
Palm the Three of Spades (top card)
and produce it from a pocket.
Place the Three on top of the small
packet to the right of the discards.
Place the small packet under
the discard pile.

Four-of-a-Kind II

Produce the top four cards.
Place them onto the discards.

Straight

Produce the top six cards,
showing only briefly, miscalling
as a straight.
Place on top of the discards.

Royal Flush

Have the spectator deal two hands
face up and his own hand face down.
He is left with one card – his selection!
He has a Royal Flush.

RETURNING HOME

Undo the Royal Flush Deal
(two methods given).
Place the packet (with the Jack of Hearts
on the face) on the discards.
Exchange the Five of Hearts and the Ace
of Hearts (if not already done).
Place the Seven of Clubs between
the Ace of Diamonds and the Three
of Clubs.
Turn the King of Spades face up again.
Exchange the two red Jacks.
Do three faro shuffles.
Replace the Four of Clubs.

Game of Chance

Game of Chance

One day I noticed an interesting regularity in the structure of the Tamariz stack. "Game of Chance" is the result of my attempts to turn this discovery into an entertaining piece of magic. (The set-up is flexible and does not strictly require a memorized stack at all, see the comments.)

The beginning of the routine is reminiscent of Vernon's "The Third Color"[1]. It may best be described as an amusing magical con: The performer plays a simple betting game with some spectators and the players lose every single round in the most spectacular fashion.

Even though everything seems quite fair and the performer acts all innocent, it is plain as day that some heavy cheating must be going on. The players get so ridiculously "unlucky" that they cannot help but laugh, but at the same time it remains quite a mystery as to how the cards keep falling the performer's way.

EFFECT

A deck of cards is shuffled and a player names a colour, red or black. Cards are turned up in groups of three and the colour of every third card is noted. For every card of his colour, the player gets a point.

Right from the beginning the players seem spectacularly out of luck: With a colour picked, every third card turns out to be of the opposite colour, throughout the whole deck!

Even though the deck is repeatedly shuffled and shown to be a random mix of reds and blacks, each new round brings the same result: No matter what colour is chosen, only cards of the other colour turn up!

After some variation with equally irritating results, the performer finally offers to play two spectators at the same time, one picking red, the other black. This way, one of them is bound to win! A third spectator acts as a referee: He freely names a colour for the performer and deals the deck to the three participants.

The performer receives a mix of red and black cards, scoring a medium number of points. When the other two players check their hands, however, one holds all red cards and the other all blacks – each exactly the "wrong" colour!

METHOD OVERVIEW

The deck is made up of three groups: Group A contains only red cards, group B contains only black cards and group C is a mix of reds and blacks. The three groups alternate throughout the deck (A, B, C, A, B, C, etc.)

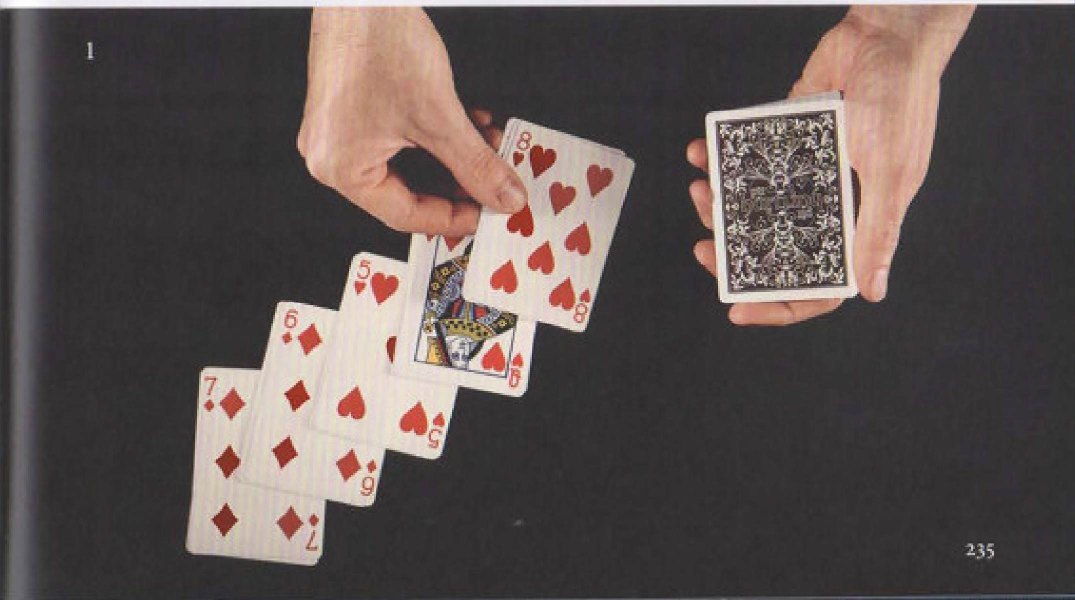
Depending on the starting point, turning cards up in threes will show only black cards, only red cards, or a mix of both colours. By starting within the desired group the performer always has complete control over the outcome.

Furthermore, the deck can be given any number of faro shuffles and cuts at any time – the alternating groups A, B, C will always remain intact (see the comments).

PREPARATION

Surprisingly, the structure with the three alternating groups ABC is quickly reached from the Tamariz stack: Remove the Ace of Diamonds and place it aside; it will not be used in the routine. Move the Ace of Clubs to between the Ace of Spades and Six of Diamonds (easy to remember: The Ace of Clubs "hides behind his big brother", the Ace of Spades) and exchange the Queen of Clubs and the Three of Diamonds (they are next to each other so this is quickly done).

With the Nine of Diamonds on the bottom of the deck, if you always turn three cards face up as a group, you will find you hit only red cards (stack numbers 3, 6, 8, 11, etc. Photo 1). If you move the Four of Clubs from the top to the bottom and repeat, you will land on only black cards (4, 43, 9, 13,



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[1] *The Vernon Chronicles Volume 2* (Minch, 1988) page 180.

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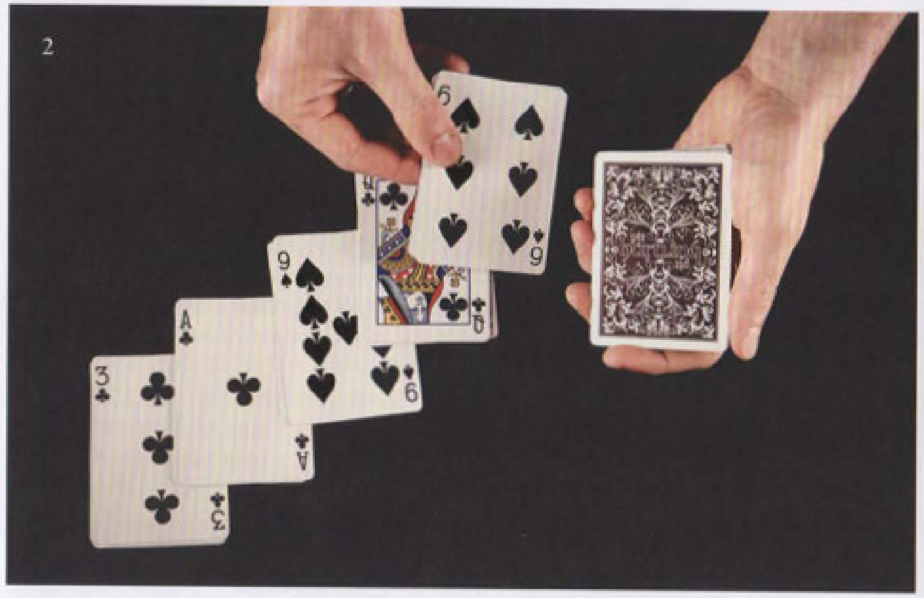

etc., Photo 2). If you move the next card (Two of Hearts) from top to bottom and repeat, this time a mix of reds and blacks will show (5, 7, 10, 12, etc., Photo 3).

During the routine, you will have to recognize the cards of the mixed group, so you need to (roughly) remember them. They are (regrouped for easier memorization, see also Photo 4):

- The Royal Flush in Spades
- The Ace, Two, Three, Four and Seven of Hearts
- The Five and Two of Diamonds and the Five and Two of Spades
- The Seven and Eight of Spades
- The Three of Diamonds

PERFORMANCE

Begin by false shuffling the deck and giving it one or several straight cuts (or having a spectator cut if you wish). If not already the case cut the deck to bring any card of the mixed group to the face.

PHASE I – The Demonstration

To demonstrate the procedure, clearly push over the top three cards, turn them face up as a group and place the small packet face up onto the table. Push over the next three, turn them face up and place them on top of the first group. Quickly go through most of the deck like this, always naming the colour of the card on the face. As expected, there will be a random mix of reds and blacks.

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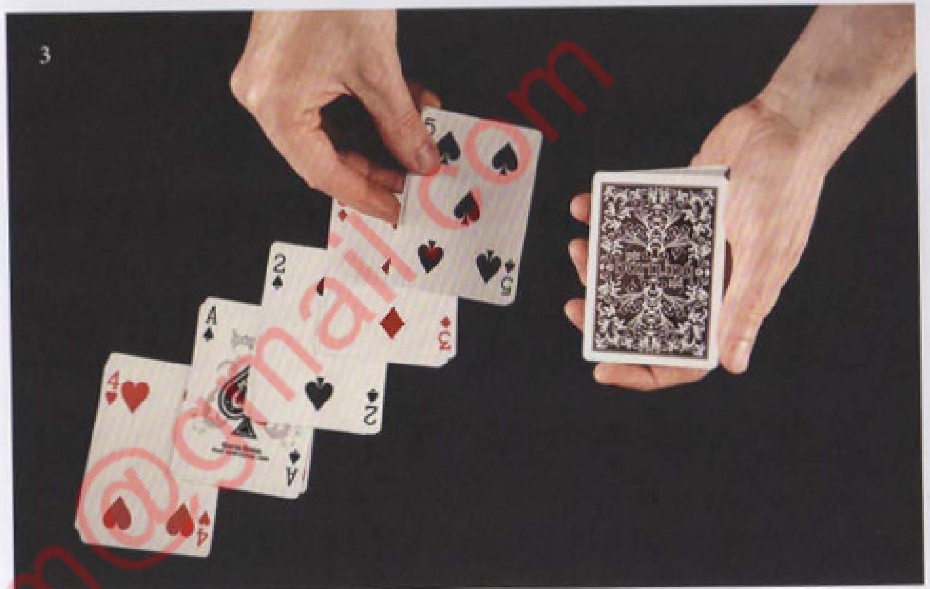

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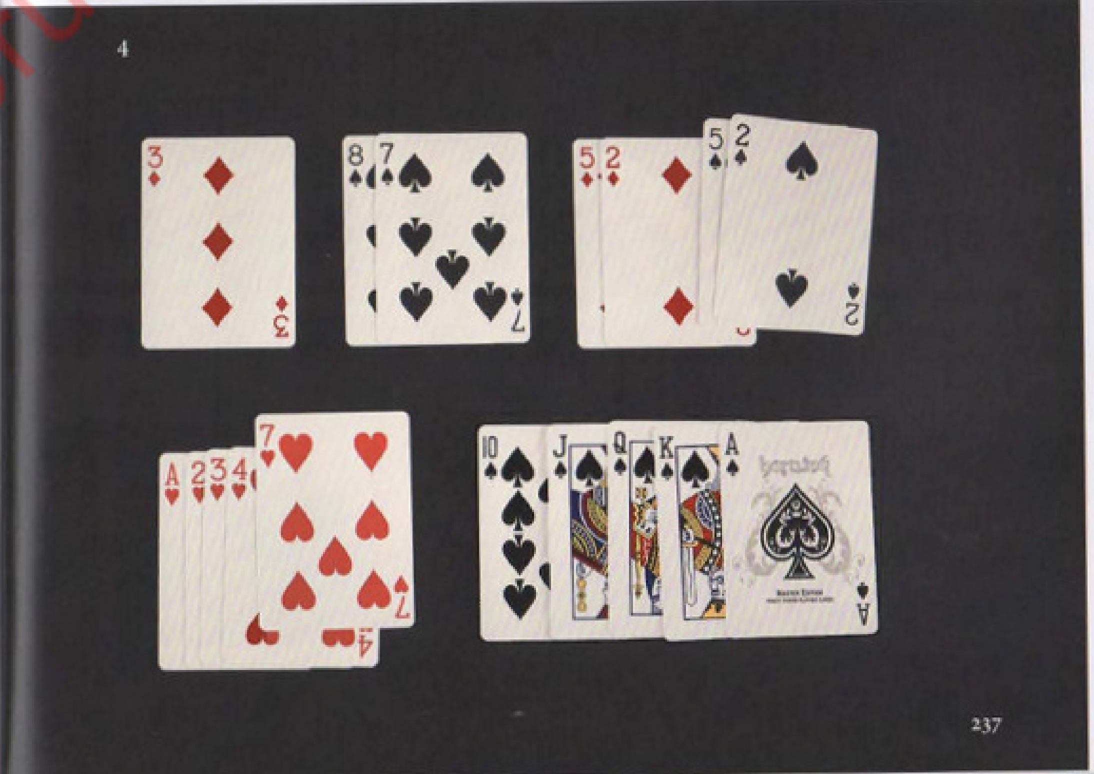

Now the game begins: Give the deck another false shuffle and one or more cuts, this time finishing with a card of the mixed group on top of the deck.[2]

PHASE II – The First Round

Under cover of the right hand, push the bottom card of the deck to the right for about half its width in preparation for a side steal (Photo 5). Ask the spectator to name a colour, red or black. You want the opposite colour on the bottom, so if he names the same colour as the bottom card, use a side steal to transfer the bottom card to the top. If he names the opposite colour, simply re-square the bottom card with the deck. (Instead of using a side steal you can also hold a break at an appropriate spot somewhere in the middle and do a pass or even openly give the deck a cut if needed.)

Turn up the cards in threes as before. As you hit card after card of the "wrong" colour, it will become apparent that something other than luck is at work. If you act all innocent and feign surprise (*"Now, look at that!? Ohhh, such bad luck; what a pity!"*) it can all be quite funny and at the same time a rather strong effect. Continue till the end of the deck.

PHASE III – Just Checking

Again give the deck a false shuffle, followed by a cut or two, this time leaving a card of the mixed group on the face again. Very quickly go through the deck in threes once more as if to check for yourself that everything is ok. And indeed, all is as it should be: The cards come up in a random mix of reds and blacks.

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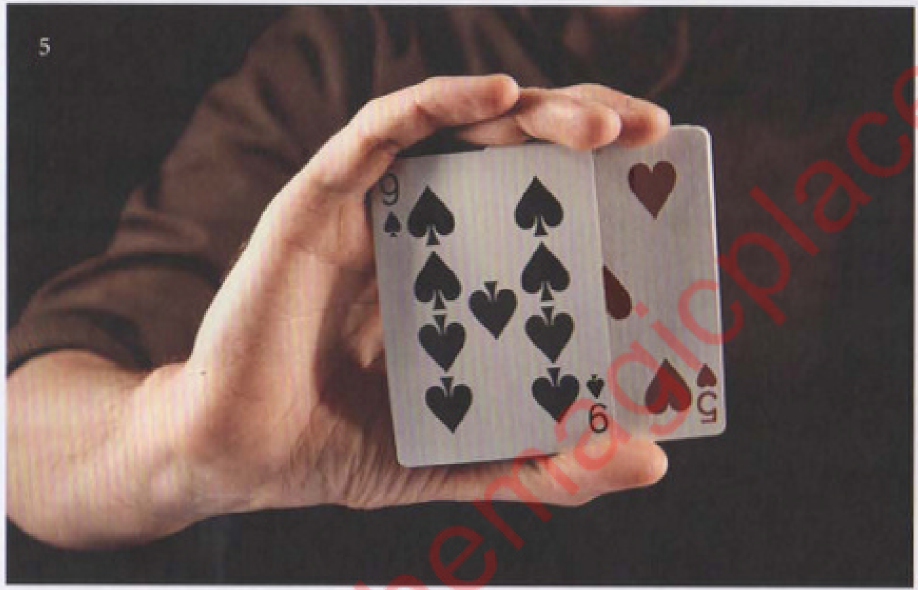

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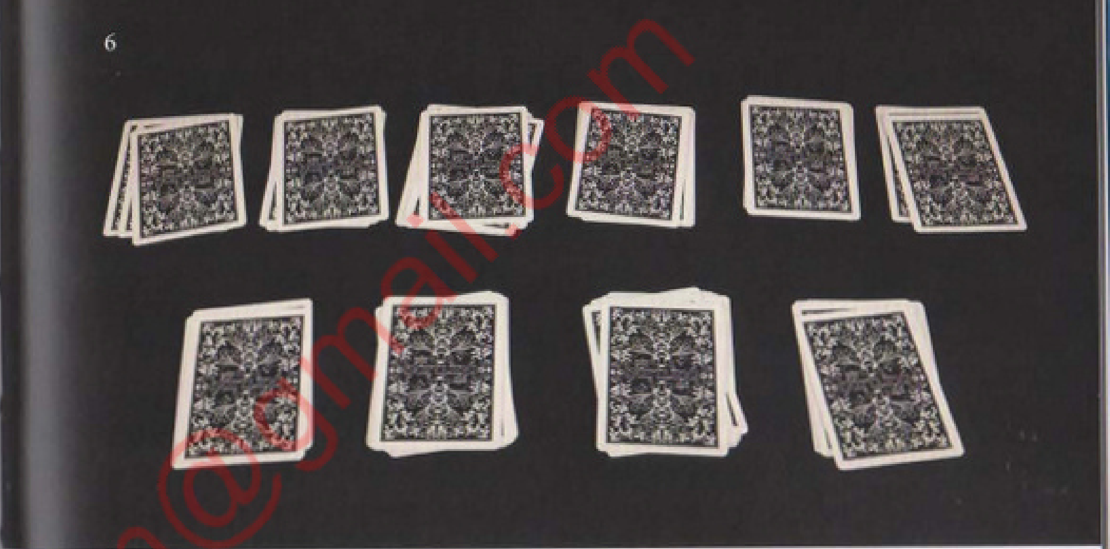

PHASE IV – Round Two

Satisfied, pick up the deck again and casually double cut the bottom card to the top. Ask for a colour and repeat the same procedure as in the first phase with a second spectator. Even though everything was ok just a second ago, suddenly, again only cards of the losing colour turn up!

PHASE V – Variation

At this point, it's time for a change. Mention that some might suspect you are cheating (heaven forbid!!), so you offer a variation: As usual, give the deck a brief false shuffle and a real cut, this time making sure to end with a card of the mixed group second from the top.

You will now distribute the deck on the table in several piles: Hold the deck in face-down dealing position and thumb over a small group, apparently at random, but in fact consisting of three, six or nine cards (any multiple of three will work, but making the groups much larger will make it harder to do without seeming to be counting). Place this group onto the table face down. Thumb over another group of cards and place it next to the first. Continue in this manner, covering the table in small piles.[3] Depending on table space, I usually divide the deck in about ten piles in two uneven rows (Photo 6).

"With the cards on the table like this", you address yet another player, *"you just name a*

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[2] An easy and inconspicuous way of cutting a card of a specific group to the top is to use a face up lift shuffle. See "Using a lift shuffle to cut the deck at a specific spot" in the section "Returning Home" of "Close Encounters" on page 53.

[3] You can also at some point push over small groups of cards (always three, secretly) until somebody says stop and then drop this packet to the table. Done once or twice, his helps to give the impression of indifference.

colour, red or black, and we'll just turn over and have a look. Which is it going to be?" The top cards of each pile will be black, and the cards on the face of each pile will be red, so depending on which colour is named, you will either turn over the top cards or the whole piles.

This is a classic two-way out situation and done matter-of-factly either action will seem quite natural. There is, however, a little verbal ploy that you may want to use to add another layer of cover: So far, the wording was deliberately vague ("we will turn over", accompanied by a gesture that could easily mean turning over the top cards or the entire piles). As soon as the spectator names his colour, immediately turn away from him, addressing the audience at large and add: *"Sometimes there are more reds on top and sometimes more blacks. It's a gamble, you know"*, or *"Sometimes there are more reds on the bottom and sometimes more blacks. It's a gamble, you know"*, whichever is needed. Turning back to the spectator, pretending to have missed his answer will make him repeat his chosen colour. By now, however, you have committed to a procedure, so when you turn over either the top cards or the whole piles, the action will seem announced.

Have the spectator point to any pile and turn over the top card of that pile (or the whole pile, as needed). The wrong colour will show. Have him point to another pile and repeat. Eventually, show all piles in quick succession. As more and more cards are turned up, it becomes quite obvious that the spectator bet on the wrong colour again. The table covered in all reds (or all blacks) is quite a memorable image (Photo 7).

7

Let this picture sink in and after a small pause collect the piles again to return the deck to the same order. (If you turned over only the top cards of the piles, turn those cards face down again and then place the piles one on top of the other in the order they were dealt. If, on the other hand, you turned the whole piles face up, leave the piles face up and place one on top of the other in reverse order.)

PHASE VI – Finale

"Look", you say, *"I want you to win!"* And, addressing two new spectators, one to your left and one to your right: *"Why don't you pick one colour and you the other? This way, one of you is bound to win!"* Even though by now nobody will believe a word you say, the logic seems inescapable. False shuffle and hand the deck to a spectator directly opposite you (a card of the mixed group should still be second from the top). During the following he will act as a referee.

With the deck safely in his hands, have the two spectators agree on who plays which colour and then ask the "referee" to pick a colour for you. The deck is out of your hands, and all choices are free, so it does all seem pretty fair.

In fact, you are still in complete control: When you handed the deck to the referee, you took note of the top card of the deck. You tell the referee to deal the deck to the three players (the two spectators and yourself), gesturing for him to deal the top card either to the spectator to your left or to your right, depending on who picked which colour. In other words, you make sure the two players each receive the "wrong" colour by having the referee deal clockwise or anticlockwise.

Let's assume the spectator on your right picked the colour red. The top card is black, so you indicate your helper to deal the top card to him (had he picked black, you would have the top card dealt to the other player). Have the referee deal the next card to you *face up*. The next card goes to the third player, again face down. The deal is continued in this manner, the two players receiving their cards face down while you get your cards face up. (After a few rounds you may want to take the deck from the spectator and finish the deal yourself to speed things up a bit.)

During that deal, have the referee remind you which colour he picked for you and openly count how many cards of that colour you receive. This will keep the deal somewhat interesting and at the same time it is seen clearly that all is fair: You receive a good mix of reds and blacks, as is to be expected. At the end of the deal you will have eight (or nine) cards of your colour. *"An average result, and quite beatable"*, as you say.

To finish have the two players remind everyone what colour they picked and show their hands: Each of them got only cards of the opposite colour (Photo 8).

RETURNING HOME

At the end of "Game of Chance" there will be three face-up groups of cards, one red, one black and one mixed (Photo 8 again). Shuffle the two spectators' hands together with a faro shuffle such that the card with

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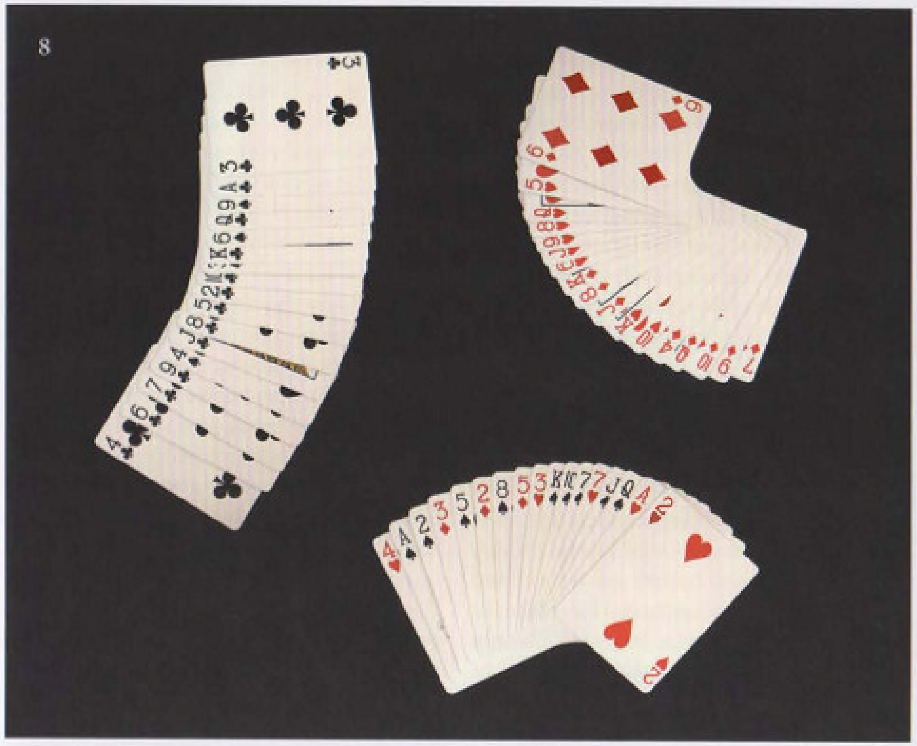

the lower stack number ends up on the face of the combined packet (that is, in reverse memorized order). Place the combined packet face up on top of your own hand (also face up).

Hold the deck face up in the right hand in position for an overhand shuffle. Peel the face card into the left hand with the left thumb. Next, execute a milk-action, peeling the top and bottom cards together off the deck and onto the first card. Next is a single card again, then again the top and bottom cards together, and so on, alternating between a single card and a milk-action till the end of the deck.

It just remains to undo the small changes from the beginning (move the Ace of Clubs back to its position, exchange the Queen of Clubs and Three of Diamonds and add the Ace of Diamonds to the deck) and you are back in memorized order.

COMMENTS

"Game of Chance" is somewhat flexible in method and presentation. Let's have a look at a few aspects of method first:

Applying the faro shuffle

In the description it was suggested to give the deck quick false shuffles in between phases. This is perfectly ok and the routine works just fine as described. However, as already hinted at in the Method Overview, there is another possibility. Instead of false shuffling, you can also give the deck faro shuffles: Due to a mathematical principle first described by Alex Elmsley[4] any number of faro shuffles and real cuts will not affect the structure of the set-up – the three groups A, B, C will survive faros and always remain intact and separate.[5]

Using the faro shuffle in the routine has two advantages: First, it can be clearly seen that the cards do genuinely get mixed (after interlacing the halves you may somewhat sloppily spread the elongated deck on the table and have a spectator push the cards together herself, for example, or even use one or more of Juan Tamariz's "evil ruses" to make it seem like the cards are interlaced irregularly)[6].

Secondly, without the faros, an attentive spectator might notice that the same cards always show up in the same order. While the faros keep the groups separate, they do change the order of the cards *within* the groups, making it all but impossible even for close observers to recognize any structure whatsoever.

Here then, is a way to do "Game of Chance" using, for example, two faro shuffles:

From memorized order make the small changes as described in "Preparation". Then, holding the deck face down, very quickly deal the deck into four piles, turning the cards face up in the process, and comment that *"this is how the cards are dealt in complicated games like Poker or Bridge."* Announce a game much simpler than that, and collect the piles in reverse order (four onto three onto two onto one). You have given the deck a quick double antifaro.[7] From here, proceed as follows:

PHASE I

Introduce the game as described, showing a random mix of reds and blacks.

PHASE II

False shuffle and play the first round: The first spectator gets very unlucky.

PHASE III

Faro shuffle and check for yourself again: All is good; the colours are random again.

PHASE IV

False shuffle and play the second round: The curse hits a second spectator.

PHASE V

False shuffle. Distribute the deck into piles – yet another spectator is out of luck.

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[4] "The Constant Stack" in "The Mathematics of the Weave Shuffle", *Pentagram Vol. 11, No. 9, 10 and 11*, June, July and August 1957. The whole article can also be found in *The Collected Works of Alex Elmsley Vol. 2* (Minch, 1994), page 302.

[5] As the deck contains an odd number of cards, the faros will be of the "straddle" variety: Simply cut the deck in half and shuffle twenty-six into tweny-five, it does not matter which packet is the bigger one. With each faro, the order of the groups actually changes from A, B, C to A, C, B and back again, but the groups themselves always remain separate.

[6] "Notes on the Faro and other Shuffles. 2. To simulate errors", *Sonata* (Tamariz, 1991), page 85.

[7] See also "Poker Night at the Improv" (page 210) where the deck is openly given a triple antifaro under the pretext of a quick memory demonstration.

PHASE VI

Faro shuffle (the deck is now in memorized order[8]) and go into the finale.

The spectator cuts before the deal

To dispel any doubts, at any point immediately before a deal, you may (apparently) have a spectator give the deck a cut, using the handling of the Jay Ose false cut as described in "Murphy's Law" on page 138.

Without a stack

As you have seen, "Game of Chance" does not require a fixed stack: You can take any seventeen red cards, seventeen black cards and seventeen easily remembered cards for the mixed group, alternate the three groups A, B, C, A, B, C, etc. and perform the routine exactly as described.[9] While "Game of Chance" does not actually require a memorized deck, it is included in this book because the set-up is so quickly reached from Tamariz stack (and also because it was the stack which made me stumble upon the idea in the first place).

After those hints on aspects of method, let's have a quick look at the presentation:

If you can't hide it, paint it red

While the underlying principle and details of "Game of Chance" are quite deceptive even for knowledgeable audiences, there is one major drawback: Not once in the routine can spectators shuffle the cards themselves. In fact, it will be quite obvious that the performer somehow controls the outcome. This is, of course, is exactly the point of the presentation: The performer acts all innocent and allegedly feels sorry for the unlucky (?) players, but at the same time he clearly makes it all happen himself!

What makes the routine work, magically, then, is exactly how the performer can make the cards fall his way and seemingly control the whole deck, even when the cards are repeatedly shuffled and the spectators' choices are always free.

The approach of basically admitting cheating by over-acting all innocent can not only be quite funny, it also takes the wind out of the sails of any spectator who might otherwise challenge the performer to have the deck shuffled by one of them.

Varying the deal

No matter exactly how you structure the routine, the deck will be dealt through in groups of three a number of times. With those deals you want to strike a balance between speed and clarity: At the beginning you may want to deal the groups a bit slower, each time clearly pushing over three cards. In phase II, the first actual round to be played, I often hand the deck to a spectator to do part of the dealing himself. This clearly establishes that the deal is legitimate, and it will not be questioned when you deal the following rounds more quickly yourself.

Instead of turning up groups of three it is also nice once in a while to turn up a few cards one by one: Making it clear that only the third card counts, it can be quite unnerving to see a random mix of reds and blacks and the all-important third card is always of the wrong colour!

Another touch is casually to spread the deck face up after a deal-through: The spectators have just seen seventeen cards of the same (wrong) colour and immediately the deck is seen to be a normal, random mix of reds and blacks. This contrast nicely drives home the improbability (almost impossibility) of hitting only cards of the wrong colour.

A wager

Another presentational idea is to use some kind of wager for each phase. You may, for example, start "Game of Chance" by visually changing a few pieces of paper into small denomination bills and handing those out to a number of players. During the routine they all lose the money back to you. This can be quite fun, and it also sweetens the bitter pill of losing, as they are just handing back your own bills.[10]

Winning and losing

As you have seen, in "Game of Chance" you are always in complete control of the outcome: Not unlike the old Endless Chain you can make each player win or lose at will. This allows for variations, like having a child repeatedly win while the kid's parents always lose, for example. If you are a good Christian (and find a non-boring presentation for it) you may even have everybody win.

If you are using wagers as suggested above, a very funny situation for one of the later phases is this: You play against one spectator who bets on one colour. At the same time you make another bet with another spectator, who bets on the other colour. Together, you point out, they have it all covered. It does sounds plausible, but in fact you arrange matters so that the first spectator is one you have played before and he has already lost his wager. Now he does indeed win that round (great!), but when the time comes to pay up, you "realize" that "unfortunately" he had nothing left to bet, so he wins nothing. The second spectator on the other hand, has lost his bet, so, of course, you take his bill as well!

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[8] Except the small changes done during the preparation.

[9] In fact, if you are not concerned with preserving a stack, you can collect the packets from phase V in any haphazard order.

[10] Handing out money (and later winning it back) is a delightful opening gambit famously used by Juan Tamariz in his wonderful stand-up Three Card Monte routine (see for example, Stevens Magic Video Library Vol. 41).

Last Word

It has been said that books are just long letters to friends. And indeed, after the publication of my first book *Card Fictions* it has been wonderful to experience the incredible kindness of so many readers across world. It was all most surprising and rewarding, and if you have been one of them, I sincerely thank you for it.

It has also been amazing to see the numerous variations and adaptations of the tricks. Indeed, my favourite part has always been to hear to hear a routine made it into somebody's show. After all, isn't this what it is all about?

While it is perfectly all right, of course, to study magic books purely out of academic interest or as intellectual stimulation (just like a musician might read sheet music, for example), magic ultimately exists only in performance.

I know the routines in this book very well, and believe me: These guys are free-range routines! They want to get out and run around and astonish people! And for this, they need your help.

So, grab a deck, put in a little practice and free them from between the covers of this book. It gives me great pleasure to imagine that these tricks will not only continue to astound my own spectators but find their way into your repertoire and happily amaze your audiences as well.

I hope you will enjoy performing them as much as I have over the last years. I wish you and your audiences a wonderful time!

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